October 2001

NEA Today

The Magazine of the National Education Association

NEW NEA VALUEBUILDER PRODUCTS NOW AVAILABLE!
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No More 'Poor' Schools

Tackling the achievement gap by closing the income gap

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NEA Today

October 2001

Volume 20 • Number 2

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page 8

Chris Seward

No More 'Poor' Schools

In Wake County, North Carolina, educators are trying to improve low-income students' achievement through social class integration—mixing kids from different income levels in the same classroom. Laura Brown (cover) and Peggy Credle (above) say all students learn better with this arrangement.

Cover photo by Chris Seward

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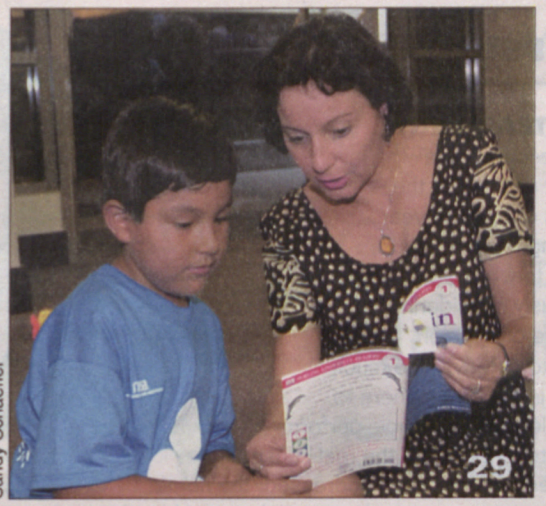
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Letters

LEAVE TEACHING?

I am a second grade teacher and this is the beginning of my fifth year of teaching.

I love teaching, but I am seriously considering leaving the profession (Cover Story, May). Too much pressure is put on teachers to raise the level of academic performance of students, when the real cause of the problem has not been addressed: the home.

Far too many parents do not sit down and read to their children. They let them watch too much television.

Also, parents do not discipline the kids at home. Many children know that all they have to do is cry and they will get what they want. Then, when the kid comes to school and has to follow rules, and has a teacher who means "no" when he or she says it, the kid goes home and tells the parent that the teacher is mean.

That teacher is now in trouble with the administration. Teachers who set boundaries for kids and stick to them are told they are "emotionally abusing" kids.

Then we are told we have to do something positive to give them an incentive to do what they should do anyway.

We should not have to bribe them with popsicles and pizza to get them to obey.

Kim Jarman,
Barstow, California

Becky Heavner

RAISING THE BAR

Raising the bar for admittance into teacher preparation programs (Debate, September) is the single most important step for improving the professional status of teachers.

Years ago, teaching was one of the few choices open to intelligent, career-minded women. There seemed to be an unending supply of top students going into teaching.

Now, these young woman have infinite options offering more money and respect. While teaching still attracts bright and dedicated young people, Michael Thomas was absolutely correct when he stated that too many students choose an education major because they do not know what else to choose. In fact, education programs are notoriously the easiest programs.

Barbara Hawk is right that success in school is not the only indicator of future teaching success, but she is wrong when she discounts it as expendable.

We are professionals engaged in the promotion of intellectual endeavors. We need to have compassion and understanding for those who find learning difficult, but that doesn't mean we should be excused from being experts in our disciplines. It doesn't mean we should accept new members into the profession from the bottom of the collegiate barrel.

If we hope to raise the quality of teachers and the public's perception of our professionalism, making teaching preparation programs more selective is an essential step.

Virginia Marconi
Duxbury, Massachusetts

"Should we raise the bar on admission to teacher prep programs?" This question is really a statement that teachers today aren't very good.

And it leads to the conclusion that billions of dollars should be spent—not on raising salaries—but on the burgeoning business of professional development. This new business will make rich those who don't want to teach, while leaving teachers in the same dubious status.

Both debaters dropped the ball. Contrary to Michael Thomas' argument, raising standards will not solve the teacher shortage. It will mean fewer teachers, not more.

And improved teacher quality will not electrify taxpayers into coughing up tax dollars. Taxpayers and reformers have no intention of increasing their "labor costs" until compelled by severe shortages or by union action.

Higher entry standards may weed out unfit students, but they will not inspire better students to take their places because an education degree does not guarantee a brighter future today than 30 years ago, especially given the politician and business-leader talk that, "Money is not the answer."

Barbara Hawk's argument that weak students make good teachers is indefensible. We set low standards, not to attract students who struggled with their own education, but because the working conditions and salaries are so poor that the most talented people won't consider teaching.

What neither Thomas nor Hawk recognizes is that entrance requirements are almost irrelevant. The schools have been saved by the supply of modestly qualified and often very talented teachers who follow a self-sacrificing, give-your-life-for-others philosophy.

Those who are primarily motivated by making big bucks are not going to teach. Period.

Bill Harshbarger
Matoon, Illinois

PAIGE'S SOLUTIONS

Secretary Paige (Interview, September), the ex-college coach/college president/district superintendent, has never worked a day in his life on the front lines of K-12 education. I've spent over 40 years there, so I was astounded at his statement: "We already know everything we need to know to go in and fix the problems of these kids that need fixing."

His attitude typifies the arrogance and ignorance of the Bush administration regarding education. They neither know nor care about real kids and real schools.

Patrick Nagle,
Olympia, Washington

SINGING PUNISHMENT

In response to the history teacher in Ohio who handles tardiness by making transgressors sing a song in front of the class, I would respectfully ask her to find another solution (Dilemma, September).

Why not make them recite a poem, or do a math problem, or recite the Gettysburg Address? Better yet, why not solve the problem without belittling either the student or the subject?

Please don't use music (especially singing) as a penalty!

I wonder if she's thought about how personal someone's singing voice is. No one else in the world has one exactly like it. She is turning a wonderful human experience into something dreaded and, probably, laughed at.

Punctuality isn't the only lesson being taught here!

Lea Ann Schramm
Yankton, South Dakota

Two of the approaches to solving the chronic tardiness problem were based on embarrassment. Today's educators know that this type of strategy is a short-term solution and does not, in the long-run, help students become responsible.

Students need teachers who work on building positive relationships with them. They need to know that their teacher sincerely cares about them and their success in the classroom. If a student feels connected to the teacher and the class he or she teaches, the student will have the motivation necessary to be on time.

Carleen Kissane
Portland, Michigan

ROOM FOR EVERYONE

If it's true, as William Bennett claims (Letters, September), that most NEA members are old, dyed-in-the-wool liberals like him and that the minority are taking up unwanted space, I will cease paying dues!

I don't expect NEA to agree with all my opinions, but I do expect my opinions to be respected. It seems "liberals" love to cater to minority opinions except for the views of conservative Christians.

Many Christian churches, including my own, provide supplies and mentors to area public schools because they care about the quality of life of children. NEA would do well to keep the relationship with conservatives open and respectful.

Pam Knuutila
Gastonia, North Carolina

William Bennett says that giving space in *NEA Today* to "members in the minority" who voted for President Bush was "appalling." He also says, "...Texas was one of the most unlivable states in the country in a recent survey..."

That you gave space to the minority voice is not appalling, rather it is refreshingly honest and open. I prefer an organization that represents *all* of its members. What *is* appalling is Mr. Bennett's claim that Texas is one of the most unlivable states in our country. Texas is a great state with great people.

Lisa Albon
San Diego, California

P. E. EVERY DAY

I was disappointed that the NEA Resolutions (Representative Assembly report, September) did not include more on physical education.

The youth of our nation is in the worst physical condition in our history. Students have the right to physical education *every day*. They have the right to be taught by instructors certified in the field. And instructors have a right to be evalu-

ated on the basis of their teaching, not their won-loss record as coaches. Elementary school physical education should be taught by elementary school specialists.

We must teach young people the joys and benefits of an active lifestyle.

Joe Herzog
Fresno, California

MATH PRACTICE

The article on "Math Wars" (Inside Scoop, May) says, "TIMSS classroom observers found that American teachers focus heavily on memorizing (and) ... thought they were teaching for understanding, but actually were teaching the way they themselves were taught: Learn the rules and practice, practice, practice." The article disparaged this.

My daughter has about 40 minutes of math homework a night that is "practice, practice, practice" and her middle school runs contests on timed multiplication tests, with many students vying to be the accoladed school winner. Our district ranked #6 in the world in math on TIMSS (and #1 in the world in science).

Understand, *then* practice, practice, practice!

Maureen Olszewski
Naperville, Illinois

METHODS COURSES

Relaxing the methods course prerequisites for prospective teachers, simply to fill open positions is unfair to children and to all teachers who earned their credentials via conventional means (Debate, May).

I left accounting for the classroom 11 years ago. It took me six years to earn my master's working full-time and going to night school.

Not all classes were what I would call "essential," but giving any adult with a degree full charge of 20-plus young minds is criminal.

Don't even mention signing bonuses—what message is that sending to teachers who have put in years of service?

We teach because we love it. If we were in it for the money, we'd hop from district to district, like the free-agents in professional sports!

Gary Metz
La Grange Park, Illinois

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of five ways:

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Letters are edited for length and clarity.

STUDENT LABORERS

In response to the March Dilemma, "What Do You Do When Students' Late Work Hours Affect Their Studies": In California, we have child labor laws that restrict the hours a student under 18 may work.

That student must obtain a work permit issued by the school before his or her first day on the job. Students aged 14 or 15 may never work after 7 p.m. during the school year. Students who are 16 or 17 may never work past 10 p.m. on a night preceding a school day.

The classroom teacher can revoke the student's work permit at any time for such cause as habitually sleeping in class, not turning in homework, failing classes, continual absence or tardiness, or if the student is asked by the employer to work during school hours.

The work permit can be revoked until the school feels it is in the student's best interest to be employed.

Vernon Braaten
Santee, California

MYTHS AND LABELING

Janice Barton's concerns (Letters, May) are based on myths about sexual orientation.

She says labeling a 12-year-old "gay" may be a self-fulfilling prophecy. Very few people want to label a 12-year-old "gay" or "straight." But I do see family and friends asking very young students who they like (of the opposite sex), and whether they have a boyfriend or girlfriend yet.

I also see 12-year-olds in the halls forming heterosexual couple relationships and calling anyone they don't like "gay" or "queer." These children are already labeling themselves and each other, and being labeled by their peers. They are learning about oppression, and I think they deserve our input.

I would worry less about self-fulfilling prophecies and more about trying to teach children how to be compassionate and nonjudgmental.

Barton brought up the risks and responsibilities of sexual activity. This is a separate issue. Both heterosexuals and homosexuals can choose to wait for sex. Both can choose healthy sexual relationships or risky, destructive behavior.

Twelve-year-olds may or may not know their sexual orientation, but they definitely know what it means not to fit in and to be called names. If they are called "gay" but are not gay or don't understand the idea, how confusing and hard for them. If they are called "gay" and know they are truly gay, is this a promise to them of the treatment they can expect all their lives?

And if we adults pretend we didn't hear, what are we teaching these children?

Jennifer Needles
Seattle, Washington

President's Viewpoint

BY BOB CHASE

Challenging the Almighty Test

Teachers and parents must join forces and put the standardized test in its place.

In Scarsdale, New York about a hundred parents of eighth graders held their children out of school during testing. In Louisiana a group of parents has filed a civil rights complaint against the state's high-stakes test system. In Virginia, parents have organized a statewide association against the commonwealth's high-stakes standardized tests.

Parents in Montgomery County, Maryland blistered school members' ears last spring when their eighth-grade children spent 50 hours in testing (on one district-mandated test, two state tests). Some parents in northern California have even printed up bumper stickers that declare: "High-Stakes Are For Tomatoes."

Nationwide, a recent public opinion poll done by Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup, a nonpartisan organization, shows serious erosion of parental support for testing over the past five years. A growing number of parents now think that too much emphasis is being placed on tests.

Working together, I believe that parents and educators can restore some sanity and common sense to student assessment.

The basic problem, of course, is that states from California to Massachusetts have botched their testing programs. In the name of "accountability," politicians have rushed to impose high-stakes standardized tests—ignoring the warnings of testing experts in both academia and publishing who oppose the use of a standardized test as the sole factor in determining a student's knowledge.

Harcourt Educational Measurement, for example, offers this warning to states using its popular Stanford Achievement Test: "Test scores may certainly enter into a promotion or retention decision. However, they should be just one of the many factors considered and probably should receive less weight than factors such as teacher observation, day-to-day classroom performance, maturity level, and attitude."

Together, I believe that parents and educators can restore sanity and common sense to student assessment. Testing is an indispensable tool of our teacher's trade. However, to tie education reform to the single goal of raising test scores may seem like a good idea atop Mount Olympus, where no children live, but in the real world, it has produced a rash of negative and unintended consequences.

There is mounting evidence, for instance, that high-stakes tests in states such as Texas are spurring a dramatic rise in dropout rates, especially among black and Hispanic students. In addition, high-stakes tests are driving good teachers right out of the profession. One teacher E-mailed me last spring: "It is not the lousy pay that's making me leave teaching. It's the unrelenting pressure to raise scores on a single, multiple-choice test. I didn't become a teacher to be a test-preparation drill sergeant." Unfortunately, I have received all too many such letters over the past year.

But the negative effects of high-stakes tests don't end there. Under pressure to raise test scores, some school systems have trimmed—or even eliminated—recess, field trips, the arts and music, science and social studies (when not on the test), and physical education. A recent headline says it all: "Area Schools Tailoring Curricula to State Tests."

Parents and teachers must make politicians understand that there is a world of difference between using a test as a stethoscope, to diagnose which children need extra help, and using it as a sledgehammer, to determine winners and losers among our children and our schools.

Comments? E-mail Bob Chase at BobChase@nea.org.

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Teaching: The Real 'Survivor' Show

The TV show *Survivor* has drawn record audiences who watch a group of people endure physical and mental challenges. This Ohio teacher believes teachers do quite a bit of surviving themselves.

BY BARBARA TROPF

I'm sure there aren't many people out there who haven't heard of the reality TV show *Survivor*. The show's motto is: Outwit, Outplay, Outlast. This sounds like the motto of the profession of teaching to me. I could go on for pages and pages comparing the television show to the realities of teaching, but I won't. Instead, simply imagine if schools were run like that show.

Here are just a few ideas that might improve our ratings:

Host: Each school should have a spokesperson—a person who appeals to everyone, who explains the rules of the game. Someone who, with a dazzling smile and radiant looks, will break all the news, good or bad, to parents, press, and community. If our ratings drop, we get a new host.

Tribal Council: We wouldn't mind attending staff or in-service meetings more if they involved tiki torches and were held in an exotic locale. The ambiance of a campfire is sure to stir our creative juices and unite us in our cause. But please, no grubs for snacks.

Reward Challenges: On the television show, the tribes are given a challenge. If they win, their tribe receives something special that will make their time on the show a little more comfortable.

We face more challenges in a week than they do the whole length of the series. What's our reward? What do we get to make our time more comfortable? Nothing! Might I suggest a few: a compliment, a thank you, a pat on the back, someone to run all our copies for us, someone to grade our papers, more than a half hour for lunch, a personal secretary, time off for good behavior… You get the idea. We have an endless list. Just ask.

Immunity Idol: "No, I'm sorry. Mrs. Smith is in possession of the immunity idol this week. You may not bother her at all. She has immunity from students, parents and administration. You'll have to call back some other time. Perhaps next year."

Voting Someone Out of the Tribe: This could be the teacher's favorite part. "Mom and Dad, I have some bad news. The tribe has spoken and I have been voted out. I have to find a new tribe at another school."

Sponsors: Advertisers, take note. Companies should provide teachers with clothing and other products. The sign near the door could read, "Teacher's wardrobe this week provided by: The Gap, J. Crew, and Nike." What more could advertisers want? It's a cheap price to pay for exposure to hundreds of possible consumers and their parents. If we look good, they look good.

Joe Glick

***Dressed in survivor-like clothing in rural Ohio, Barbara Tropf thinks about what schools would be like if they were run like the TV show,* Survivor.**

Automotive Reward: At least one participant in the show drives home in a brand new vehicle. Major car companies see this as a way to advertise their new product to a large audience. Local car dealers could learn a lesson from their big brothers. They could provide a new vehicle every year to a teacher in their local school district. A small but tasteful placard on the vehicle would read, "Mr. Green's car provided by J. Doe's Automotive Sales where we believe that teachers and their cars have a lot of class."

Think of all the places teachers go: PTA meetings, scout events, and more. The vehicle will be seen by a lot of consumers. Of course, dealers should provide us with fire engine red convertibles or sporty SUVs—cars that would really attract the attention of potential buyers.

Merchandising: The producers of the television series have done an excellent job of selling their show to the masses. They even have a line of related merchandise. Maybe it's time for schools to start promoting their teachers. We might be missing out on a potential moneymaker here. What student wouldn't want a calendar that features the teachers in their school? Teacher T-shirts would be flying off the racks. "Oh! You're wearing the latest Miss Miller. I'm going to have to get that one." Teacher trading cards would be swapped on the playground during recess. Eventually, we could branch out into school supplies.

Cash Prize: Cash prize! Cash prize! Enough said.

We play the "Survivor" game every day. By the end of the year, we have outwitted, outplayed and outlasted everyone for nearly 200 days. It's time that we start winning the prizes and rewards. ✔

Barbara Tropf has been teaching for 10 years at Parkman Elementary, a small rural school east of Cleveland. This year, she's teaching third grade. Reach her at: ca_tropf@lgca.org.

From time to time, members ask why *NEA Today* accepts advertising.

The answer is really a matter of simple economics. Advertising dollars allow us to offset some of the cost of producing and mailing this magazine to NEA's 2.6 million members (excluding the Association's higher education members.)

As you've probably noticed, the largest advertiser in *NEA Today* is NEA Member Benefits Corporation, a separate and wholly owned subsidiary of NEA that offers an array of products at attractive prices to NEA's membership.

Bill Fischer
editor

Our commercial advertisers vary somewhat from year to year, but they tend to come from the ranks of companies in core areas such as computer and computer software manufacturers, plus an array of nonprofit institutions.

Overall, advertising takes up less than 25 percent of an average issue of *NEA Today*, but contributes hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to defray production costs for producing an average 52-page monthly edition for NEA members. As a result, the cost per member for eight issues of *NEA Today* is just $4.10 a year.

While we encourage and actively recruit new advertisers to *NEA Today*, we also apply a set of standards to screen out advertising that is inconsistent with or counter to NEA policies.

School fundraising ads, for example, don't show up on our pages because NEA policy clearly states that schools and school activities should be supported through funding at the local, state, and national levels. Schools shouldn't have to rely on bake sales and such to make ends meet.

NEA Today also doesn't accept alcohol or tobacco ads, for obvious reasons. Commercial advertisers like McDonald's can't buy space in *NEA Today* to sell burgers and fries, but the company can buy space for its philanthropic efforts, like its recent campaign to promote environmental awareness.

Bill Fischer

Peggy Credle finds that having a diverse student body at Carnage Middle School helps children from all income brackets learn better.

No More 'Poor' Schools

How can we help low-income students achieve? Raleigh's answer: Don't isolate them.

Math teacher Laura Brown leaves home at 6:15 a.m. and heads for Carnage Middle School in Raleigh, North Carolina. She drives past downtown and turns onto a street lined with tiny, wood-frame houses with loose shingles and sagging roofs. Many are boarded up.

Thousands of educators work in poverty-stricken neighborhoods, and some feel a certain level of dread as they contemplate another day battling social problems beyond their control.

But not Laura Brown. As she walks into her classroom and straightens out the desks for her first group of eighth grade students, she's upbeat and excited.

"You never know what's going to happen," she says. "It's challenging, but great things happen in my classroom."

Wake County, which includes Raleigh and its suburbs, is one of the few school districts in America working to boost the achievement of low-income students by making their schools more middle class. How? With an infusion of middle-class students into their schools.

A third of the students at Carnage come, voluntarily, from middle-class neighborhoods where the typical family's problems are more manageable and the students come to school expecting, and expected, to do well.

Carnage, a magnet school, attracts them with a program for academically gifted children, a big drama program, dance, a school television station—"anything they want," says Brown.

Every inner-city school in Raleigh has magnet programs.

Raleigh teachers say the strategy is working. Many low-income students pick up higher expectations. Many more affluent students learn about the world around them, while maintaining their own academic progress.

Carnage language arts teacher Peggy Credle says all students benefit from mixing. In her cooperative learning groups, she says "The more academically able can grow by explaining what they have learned. And sometimes the less able students grasp a concept better from another student."

Credle, like Brown, reports little friction between the bused-in students and those from the neighborhood.

While many Carnage neighborhood children benefit from the special programs and from contact with students from the suburbs, others from this low-income area are bused to magnet schools outside the city.

Many go to Durant Road Middle School, attracted by its year-round school calendar. Some wind up in Peggy Larson's English class.

As Larson's students discuss Alfred Noyes' poem "The Highwayman," it's hard to see who are the locals and who just spent more than half an hour on a bus. Larson herself says she can't tell without looking at the student records.

She used to teach in another Wake County school where low-income and middle-class students were much more separate. The reason Durant is different, she thinks, is that the Durant students' parents choose to send their children there, so they feel more involved in their children's education. At the other school, low-income students were assigned.

See POOR SCHOOLS page 10

New Pioneers in America's Heartland

A small city takes on a bold experiment to mix students by income level.

Residents of La Crosse, Wisconsin, a city of 50,000 on the Mississippi River, were surprised when the national media showed up in 1991. One told a San Francisco reporter, "There's nothing here. Just bored white people."

But the journalists had not lost their way. La Crosse was the site of a pioneering —and controversial—effort to help low-income children achieve.

The plan, which originated with teachers, was to spread the city's low-income students among many schools instead of leaving them concentrated in a few.

Barbara Schultz, a guidance counselor who led the La Crosse Education Association at the time, says teachers at the low-income schools were dealing with so many problems, "they didn't have enough time to actually do the teaching."

At one school, more than half of the children moved in or out each year because their parents didn't have steady jobs. Some children spoke English poorly. Large numbers of Hmong immigrants had settled in La Crosse during the previous decade.

Two new schools were about to open, so district lines had to be redrawn anyway. Teachers proposed that they be drawn so that all schools had a mix of rich and poor.

The superintendent and school board got behind the plan, but it quickly met strong opposition, mostly from wealthier parents.

Actually, the school drama that gripped La Crosse from 1991 to 1993 was a sequel. In 1980, La Crosse reassigned students from affluent Central High School to Logan High, which had been a blue-collar school with an inferior academic program. The move sparked impassioned resistance, but the plan went ahead. Logan was quickly up-graded. The result: higher achievement for the low-income students with no loss for the wealthier students who joined them.

So when educators started talking about a similar move in the elementary schools, they had a successful precedent. The superintendent was the same person who had led the high school reform, and the school board president was a surgeon who was proud that his son was one of the first doctor's sons to go to Logan.

The board approved the changes, but this new plan provoked even more opposition than high school integration had, and not all of it was due to class or racial prejudice. Some parents just didn't want their children moved, or wanted them close to home.

In the uproar, four board members were ousted in a dramatic recall election.

But the new board, taking office in July, decided it was too late to repeal the plan totally. Instead, they allowed parents to transfer children back to their original schools—and some did. Two schools remained low-income.

LA CROSSE SCHOOLS: redrawing the lines
Opposition increasing against new
After the furor fades
Students adapting
Teachers: Students finding 'different' is OK

Erik Daily

Barbara Schultz led the La Crosse Education Association during the battles over mixing rich and poor in the classroom, which attracted national media attention.

Still, the La Crosse schools opened that autumn much more integrated than when they had closed in the spring. And the sky didn't fall in. In fact, most people liked the change. News reporters discovered that children were a lot more adaptable than their parents.

In the next election, three newcomers who had stormed in to stop the program were thrown out. The top vote-getter across the city was a Hmong community leader.

Today, says Schultz, at the schools with more balance between rich and poor, everyone is benefiting. Many students with limited English are advancing rapidly. And the other children are learning that the world is bigger than their neighborhoods.

This year, a new community task force is seeking ways to improve the social class balance in La Crosse schools. ✔

Low-income children do better in middle-class schools

Do students from low-income families achieve more in schools where most of their classmates are not poor?

Definitely, says Richard Kahlenberg, a senior fellow at the Century Foundation and a leading proponent of this approach to reducing the achievement gap between affluent and low-income children. In his book *All Together Now*, Kahlenberg describes a long line of research that consistently supports his conclusion.

In one study, involving 60,000 Minnesota children, the researchers found that "the degree to which poor children are surrounded by other poor children ... has as strong an effect on their achievement as their own poverty."

Another study showed the long-term effects of attending schools where most children are poor. Low-income children in these schools were three times more likely to become low-income adults than poor children who had wealthier classmates.

These findings are consistent with what every educator and parent knows: Children are influenced by their friends.

But doesn't it follow then that the achievement of wealthier students will suffer if they are in classes with low-income children? This fear is perhaps the biggest source of opposition to proposals for mixing middle- and low-income students. Even parents with strong social consciences don't want to sacrifice their children's futures for the sake of other people's children.

Kahlenberg says they needn't worry. He cites several major studies that found that the problems children of poverty bring to school do not affect their affluent classmates if the school remains mostly middle class. This research suggests that the middle-class majority forms the school culture and other students join in.

Kathlenberg is against putting a few middle-income children into a school that remains mostly low-income, because then their achievement is likely to decline.

"So long as a majority of the students are middle class," he says, "the middle-class kids are going to do fine."

Q&A

Charting a new course for children of poverty

Loretta Ahlrich

Lowell Weicker, Jr. was a senator from Connecticut from 1971 to 1989 and governor from 1991 to 1995. He started as a Republican but switched to Independent, establishing a reputation as a maverick willing to stake out tough positions on issues he felt were important such as racial integration and taxes.

Weicker now heads a task force of people from the worlds of politics and education looking for ways to reduce the isolation of children from different social classes in our schools.

How can your task force promote social class integration?

I asked myself the same thing as we started: Is there an answer? Or are we all just sitting here beating our chops to no end?

We realize that anything we suggest should have a chance to succeed.

I think there will be some element of public school choice. We're not for a coercive solution.

We're trying to create incentives for middle-class families to choose schools with a broad constituency, like the one in Bridgeport, Connecticut where the marine sciences are featured.

Schools could feature computers, or arts—they could feature a thousand different things that have an attraction and will get people to say, "Okay, granted my kid's going to be seeing more diversity than he's seen in the past. On the other hand, he's going to see more in the way of educational subjects."

Are you optimistic? Do you think in 20 years the situation will be better?

When I was governor, we were dealing with problems of racial isolation. It was amazing how everybody had an abundance of ideas that percolated right from the ground up, as to what could be done about it.

After I left, the legislature figured, "This is a pretty tough subject, so let's wash our hands of it and not really do much of anything."

If you leave it to the politicians, I'm not optimistic. If the American people are allowed to express themselves on choice and how you achieve it, I'm optimistic.

You have seven sons. Would you have put them in a school that had 40 percent low-income students?

Absolutely. Two of my sons had that experience. I want my children educated in a diverse setting. That's the world.

What's the purpose of education? It isn't just to go through a series of tests. It's to prepare people for the world. ✔

POOR SCHOOLS FROM PAGE 8

Durant uses an unusual hook to pull parents in. Instead of having teachers lead parent conferences, students themselves go over their work, with teachers facilitating. Larson says 80 to 90 percent of parents show up, even among city parents who must drive a long way.

Not many school districts are mixing the social classes to improve low-income students' achievement, but a high-powered task force headed by former Connecticut Governor and Senator Lowell Weicker, Jr. (see Q & A, above) is looking for ways to promote this strategy.

The task force members include NEA member Judi Sikes, a teacher from Louisville, Kentucky.

In 1998, Sikes served on a Jefferson County Teachers Association committee looking for ways to raise achievement in low-income schools. They surveyed teachers and looked at schools in other communities, and concluded that the key was to avoid having all the low-income children together in the same schools.

The teachers told school officials that children teach each other, and every school needs a critical mass of motivated learners, who are more likely to come from families that aren't struggling in poverty.

"Of course, we have good students who live in low socioeconomic circumstances," says Sikes. "But many of them qualify for advanced placement, and if your school doesn't have that, they're gone."

Jefferson County school officials, however, had little interest in breaking such new ground.

There are two major barriers: First, many middle- and upper-income parents fear that their children's achievement will suffer if they go to school with low-income children. And second, the distances can make for very long bus rides.

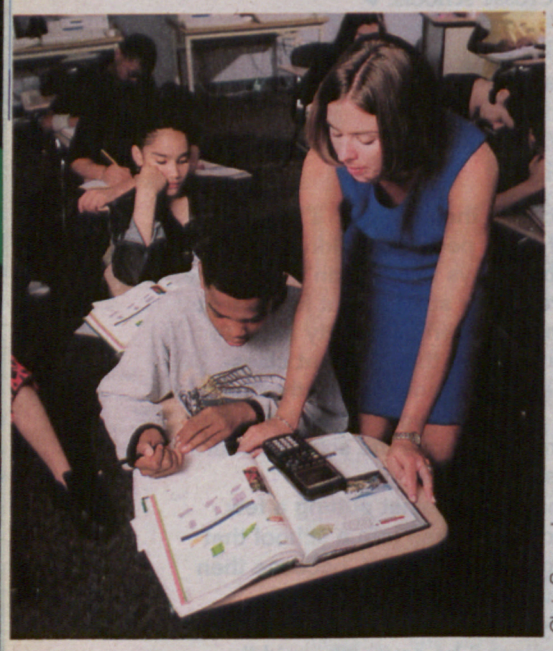
For both reasons, 16 of Wake County's 120 schools don't meet the district's target: a maximum of 40 percent of the students in each school eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, and no more than 25 percent scoring below grade level.

But Carnage is one of many Raleigh schools that do successfully attract a wide range of students. As a result, teachers like Laura Brown feel their work is a challenge, not a nightmare.

Brown has been a teacher for three years. "At the end of my first year," she recalls, "I thought I would never be able to do this and I talked about leaving. My second year, I found I could handle it."

And now, she says, "I believe everyone's life has a purpose. I'm supposed to be here." ✔

—Alain Jehlen



Chris Seward

"Great things happen in my classroom," says Carnage Middle School math teacher Laura Brown.

Resources

- The NEA *Priority Schools Resource Guide* offers practical advice for turning around schools where greater resources are needed to raise student achievement. The guide is posted at www.nea.org/issues/lowperf/priorityschools/. Many other relevant NEA resources are at www.nea.org/issues/lowperf/resources.html.
- Much of the NEA's Priority Schools Initiative is based on research found in *Closing the Achievement Gap*, published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, $20.95 on the Web at http://shop.ascd.org/. Order by phone at 800/933-2723.
- Order *All Together Now* by Richard Kahlenberg, $29.95 on the Brookings Institution Web site at www.brook.edu/press/online_search.htm.
- Excerpts from Kahlenberg's book were published by *The Washington Monthly* in December 2000 and are available online at www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2000/0012.kahlenberg.html.
- Equality and Education, a Century Foundation Web site at www.equaleducation.org/, features information and ideas about mixing social classes to improve achievement, especially in the section called "Integration." This site also has links to information on the Century Foundation's Task Force on Promoting Quality and Integration in Public Schools, headed by Lowell Weicker, Jr.
- E-mail Raleigh's Laura Brown at lmbrown@wcpss.net, and La Crosse's Barbara Schultz at bschultz@mail.sdlax.k12.wi.us.

Should staff in tougher schools get higher pay?

MICHAEL BITTEL ***was education director at a drug and alcohol abuse recovery facility in Connecticut for two years, then got a teaching degree and has taught English and social studies for three years at Crittenden Middle School in Newport News, Virginia.***

yes

One day, a tough-looking young lady came into my class. Looking at her file later on, and hearing her talk in the hallway, I learned that she had been sent to my school for a reason. She'd been involved in gang activities at her old school and took pleasure in beating up other girls.

We had to keep our eyes open continually for any violence and praise any small movement toward the positive that she made. Through continuous reinforcement, she made it through the year and her grades improved.

The more challenging assignments in teaching bring more hazards: being injured breaking up a fight, having a car vandalized, and possibly being shot, among others.

Hazard pay is traditional for those who work in many other fields. When you have increased responsibility, you have increased pay. This is a standard equation almost everywhere except in education.

In education, every teacher gets paid the same, no matter what responsibilities he or she faces. If factors make it more difficult to teach, shouldn't we reward teachers for this?

That doesn't mean teachers who don't face such challenges should get less pay. Teachers with tougher assignments have extra things on their plates, it's not that others have things taken away.

One of my young gentlemen came into school during a hot day in May with no socks on. His house-arrest beeper was showing around his ankle.

How could I communicate to him the need to hide something like the beeper while not embarrassing him? I pulled him aside and quietly told him that, for the sake of good taste, he should probably make sure to wear socks.

He wore socks reluctantly from then on.

A teacher who deals with these demands daily should be compensated more for that labor of love.

The hours I spent talking to a social worker about the possibility that one of my young ladies was being used as a prostitute by her foster parents will never leave me.

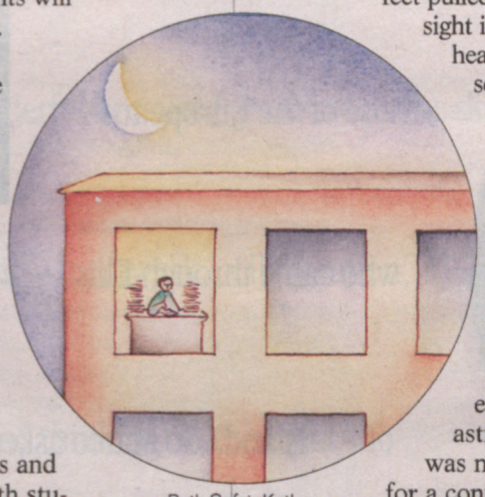
The times I prayed that the administration would not find the food I hid in my desk because I knew some of my students would go without dinner will haunt me.

The minutes and hours spent with students crying in the hallway because both of their parents were in jail and they had to live with their aunt and uncle in a small hotel room have touched my heart.

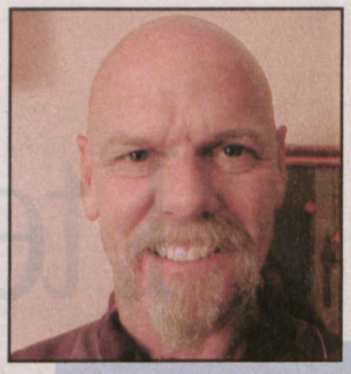
The stories can go on and on, including threats on my life.

Students like these create challenges that teachers should be compensated for.

All students deserve great teachers. The great teachers who serve in tougher assignments deserve their due also. ✔



Ruth Sofair Ketler



JOHN FLICKINGER ***dropped out at age 16 and spent eight years on the road playing rock and roll drums. Then he met his wife, quit the road, built a business, lost it, went back to school, and, ten years ago, became an English teacher. He is now at Montwood High School, El Paso, Texas.***

no

Tough is such a subjective term. Who decides?

Except for the pay, it sounded perfect: a private school for the gifted, great hours, solid, sometimes ravenous parent support, 12 to 14 gifted eighth graders. But the sheer fragility of these young souls made it the toughest place I ever taught.

The bus was full of kids, but one seat was empty. I finally found Lars in the boy's restroom, his feet pulled up out of sight in the stall. I heard him quietly sobbing, the echoes of an anguished soul.

Lars was the son of two doctors (engineering and political science). His astronomical IQ was not much help for a confused child weathering the storms of puberty. Lars, like many of his gifted peers, thought too much. Nothing was simple for this fine young mind.

Guidance from parents accustomed to excellence often just added to the pressure to succeed. Lars walked a narrow path through precipitous gorges. Above lay brilliance, below, the jagged rocks of failure.

Manic-depression is epidemic among our gifted children. Puberty, so dangerous for all kids, is even more volatile for these emotional, creative children.

Should we pay more for the trained, special teachers who are entrusted with the best and brightest? The responsibility is overwhelming. One misstep, and the teacher could lead the next great mind over the precipice.

Which end of the educational realm is more important and which is less? And what about the 90 percent who don't fall on either end? What about the regular students, that middle-of-the-spectrum group that will build our future world?

Freshmen: That first day of high school, confused and frightened, they look to teachers to give them the skills to deal with this brave new world.

It's filled with upper classmen anxious to get a little payback for the slings and arrows suffered at the hands of upper classmen before them, teachers who treat them like adults and expect them to act as such, homework (horrors), girls who look like women and act like venomous snakes. The ninth grade is perhaps the most difficult time of life and teachers are sometimes these kids' only, best hope.

Senioritis, that epidemic 18-year-old students must deal with, and teachers are the ones expected to find the cure before the disease becomes academically fatal.

I have taught gifted, at risk, and the 90 percenters, and I can tell you that, yes, it is worth more to teach them.

At risk, gifted and talented, math students, science students; when we start choosing small groups of students as being worth more, we send a message I don't think we want to send.

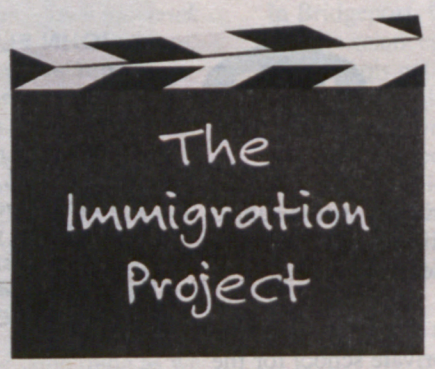
Isn't every child worth more? ✔

What's Your Opinion?

Should staff in tougher schools get higher pay?
To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should we raise the bar for admission to teacher prep programs?
The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today:*
53% Yes **47% No**

"I teach with iMovie."



When it came to teaching his students about immigration, Marco Torres, a high school social studies teacher in Los Angeles, had a different idea. "Our school is 99% Latino and I wanted the students to realize that their family experiences were just as important as those of the Europeans who came through Ellis Island." So Marco asked his students to interview their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles on digital video to chronicle their own family journeys to the

"They became the producers of their own stories. The writer, the editor, the director – some even became the actors."

Marco Torres,
High School Social Studies Teacher

"They invited their families to come and see these very personal movies. That night there wasn't a dry eye in the entire room."

United States. The students then edited their footage with iMovie.™ And the results were simply incredible. "About a week into the project they got so involved that their grade became insignificant. The most important thing was their story. It was wonderful because I got to see all the skills that corporate America and higher academia are looking for – teamwork, collaboration, problem-solving, being agile and thinking on their feet." To see how this inspiring project helped Marco strike a chord with his students and to learn more about how you can use iMovie to enhance your own lesson plan, visit www.apple.com/teachimovie or call 1-800-800-APPL.

"iMovie helped me make an impact on these kids' lives. And that's something I want to do every day."

Think different.

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Globalization Comes to the Classroom

International visitors at NEA's Representative Assembly speak out on education trends that sound painfully familiar.

Matt Ferguson

Singapore union leader Sithun Lowe, here with RA delegates, stresses that "We must learn from each other."

They may not have held U.S. passports, but the ten "International Guests" at the 2001 Annual Meeting in Los Angeles could have easily held NEA membership cards.

They attended early-morning caucus meetings of their "host" state delegation, sat with their delegations during debates at the NEA Representative Assembly, and networked with grassroots educators from across the United States.

And as leaders of education unions in their respective countries, these ten visitors spoke our language and shared our concerns on issues ranging from low teacher pay to school rankings.

"Our schools are ranked by how well they perform [on national] exams," reported Kenya National Union of Teachers President John Katumanga at an international forum held right before the Representative Assembly. "Parents then move their children to perceived 'good' schools and teachers transfer as well. Then we need to find qualified teachers for schools that are not doing so 'well.'"

"The problem of how to attract and retain good teachers, I think, is common around the world," noted Sithun Lowe, general secretary of the Singapore Teachers Union. "You know, England comes to Singapore to lure teachers to London schools!

"Our governments are talking to each other, exchanging ideas," Lowe observed. "For instance, many things we see happening in Singapore are also happening in the United Kingdom, like school ranking and charter schools. There are worldwide trends in education, and we've got to learn from each other's experience."

"Politicians say we have to put more money into education, but do nothing. We need to unite all educators!"

—Nicaraguan union leader Brigida Rivera-Rodriguez

In both the international forum and a pre-RA workshop on "Transcending National Borders," the visiting union leaders discussed these trends:

■ **The pressure of globalization.** The International Guests disagreed on the merits of globalization, but agreed that it's now a *reality*, affecting educators in rich and poor nations alike.

Lowe viewed the single world economy as an opportunity for high-tech Singapore to "reach out, regionalize, and export expertise and intellectual property."

But unionists from developing nations noted that a condition-filled loan granted by the World Bank or a low market price dictated by the World Trade Organization can prompt a national government to slash public education spending or pursue privatization.

In Nicaragua, charged union leader Brigida Rivera-Rodriguez, a World Bank-mandated restructuring plan has meant "automatic promotions of students, daily non-objective evaluations of teachers, and school closings."

Even in affluent Norway, "We're in a globalized world," added union president Helga Hjetland. "Our politicians say they can't spend money on public education or the public sector because it will 'cause inflation' and make us unable to compete internationally."

■ **Underfunding and low teacher pay.** Around the international forum table, there was grim talk of inferior salaries and teacher strikes.

In Nicaragua, a primary teacher earns $50 a month, a secondary teacher $65. In the Ivory Coast, teachers slid from an average of $200 to $100 a month in 1999-2000. "After many strikes," said union leader Salimata Doumbia, "we went back to $200 a month—but there aren't enough teaching materials, teacher motivation is lacking, and the health system is bad."

In spite of an economy floating on oil and natural gas revenues, many Norwegian local schools—especially those serving minority students and children with special needs—"have trouble with financing," reported Hjetland.

Last year, her Norwegian Union of Teachers was forced to wage a three-month strike, the longest in the nation's history, to boost the pay of predominantly female kindergarten teachers.

■ **A push for quality education.** To the nods of the other unionists, Hjetland said, "We're all concerned about quality for *all* students." Quality, emphasized her colleagues from developing countries, includes factors such as equal access to education, lower class sizes, adequate materials, decent teacher salaries, and more professional development.

Different leaders outlined different union paths to quality. In Kenya, the union is pushing the government to establish boarding schools for the children of migratory families, and backing proposed legislation to "protect the children of parents who can't pay public school fees," said Kenya's Katumanga. "And we and the government have created machinery to ensure that talented girls are sent to school."

In studious Singapore, where students score high in international math and science tests, the union is pushing the quality envelope by publicly campaigning for a more "relaxed" educational system that offers more reflective time for teachers.

"Our children are highly motivated, but highly pressured," noted Singapore's Lowe. "We killed the joy of learning in so many of them. We are suggesting that you move certain subjects—like music, literature, and art—to the afternoon sessions and get community people involved in teaching them. Let's put some of the *fun* back into teaching and learning!"

■ **Resistance from politicians.** "One common factor for all of us," said Turkish union president Alaaddin Dincer, "is that politicians say 'education is a national priority,' but every single one of us is experiencing tremendous underfunding. Our dilemma as education organizations is how to get beyond lip service to education."

Another dilemma is how to get politicians to move beyond their distrust of public employee unions. In 1994, the Nicaraguan government fired Rivera-Rodriguez from her teaching job, and just before the 2001 NEA RA, the government of St. Kitts/Nevis in the Caribbean tried to prevent St. Kitts Teachers' Union President Hillery Hunkins from traveling to Los Angeles.

Dincer reported that the ultraconservative party controlling the Turkish parliament has drafted legislation that bans public employees' right to bargain and strike, and favors docile "pro-government" unions.

In spite of severe human rights violations, "Our union will keep up the struggle against government repression," Dincer said, "and we'll work for quality public education for *all* and job security for education employees."

■ **A need for New Unionism—and educator unity.** In spite of the obstacles, Canadian Teachers Federation President Marilies Rettig recommended that education unions think outside of their "traditional roles," create a dialogue with governments on short- and long-term educational priorities, and become true partners in education reform.

Politicians "must understand that investing in a stronger educational system *now* means less dependence later" on the justice system to keep social peace, Rettig stressed.

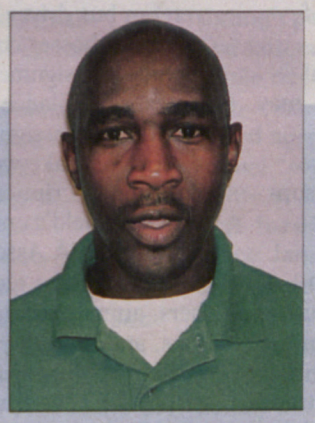
In a time of globalization, educators need a global voice to be heard by policy-makers. The best platform available: Education International, uniting 24 million unionized education workers in 155 countries.

"Without EI support, I wouldn't be here at the NEA Representative Assembly—it's as simple as that," stressed Lowe of Singapore.

"EI gives our small organization the means to work with other education unions in the Asian region, internationally with organizations like NEA, and even with American classroom teachers," he said. "I've now met lots of teachers with whom I can network." ✔

For more on Education International and worldwide trends, go to www.ei-ie.org.

Two Jobs, One Passion



Hillery Hunkins

Name and profession: Hillery Hunkins, high school remedial teacher
Position: President, St. Kitts Teachers' Union
Goals: We're fighting for official recognition of the SKTU as the bargaining agent for teachers in St. Kitts. We also want to make starting teacher salaries more competitive and increase the top pay of trained teachers by three increments. Finally, we need to have a structured grievance procedure.
Obstacles: I'm the president of a national union, plus a full-time teacher. The government didn't want to send me to the NEA Representative Assembly, and its chief education officer has told my principal I am not to be permitted to conduct any union business during school time.
Something to consider: Education is an "us" thing, it is not us versus them. It belongs to all of us, and therefore we must share equal responsibility. Our union can make important contacts and access facilities from internationally funded organizations to help build the profession. We may even be able to attract private funding and support.
The promise of St. Kitts: More than anything else, our young people are very keen on education and take it very seriously. They see it as a gateway, the single most important connection between the *now* and *then*.
The promise of our union: We've been able to open an office where we can meet and organize our materials. And we plan to set up a resource area for teachers and start our own union newsletter. We want to be able to build our own headquarters at some point, so there's a permanent home for teachers. *(Hillery Hunkins may be contacted at Hhunkins@hotmail.com)*

Heroes & Zeroes

Matt Ferguson

▲ **Los Angeles fifth grade teacher Thomas Ibarra just won't accept a textbook shortage, malfunctioning school toilets, and student overcrowding.**

When the American Civil Liberties Union initiated a lawsuit against the state of California over school funding inequities, Ibarra took photos of his school and gave depositions.

Ibarra took flak, but didn't back down. His vindication: Earlier this year, the entire Los Angeles Unified School District joined the ACLU suit.

▼ **In Washington state, two NEA local affiliate presidents recently delivered 65 pounds of broken pencils—collected at Vancouver-area rallies—to the office of Governor Gary Locke. The pencils symbolized politicians' broken promise to fully fund Initiative 732, which requires the state to provide all public school employees with annual cost-of-living raises.**

▲ **Through a Yellow Ribbon Campaign, public outreach, and a touch of the "school flu," the Louisiana Association of Educators have won a $2,060 teacher raise and improved health plan contributions. The bad news: Governor Mike Foster wouldn't budge on a permanent raise for ESP, even though state senators led by Don Hines (D-Bunkie) found a way to pay for it without harming any state programs. ESP did get a one-time $328 raise.**

▼ **In Charleston, South Carolina, five International Longshoremen's Association members face inflated state "felony rioting" charges stemming from a January 2000 picket line clash. A peaceful ILA protest over an employer's use of non-union dockworkers turned ugly when 600 police officers arrived in full riot gear.**

The "Charleston 5" won't face trial alone. They're backed by the ILA, the AFL-CIO, and now, NEA. Representative Assembly delegates affirmed NEA support for the defendants, stressing they've been "indicted for defending basic human rights."

▲ **Members of the West Washington (Indiana) Education Association tired of struggling to pay light bills. So for two-and-a-half years, these 68 rural teachers, led by President Steve Churchman, fought for a decent contract. They demonstrated at school board meetings, wore bright red T-shirts on Fridays, and even leafleted at school basketball games—a *courageous* act in the hoop-crazy Hoosier State.**

Members won a new contract in May that provides $4,000 in retroactive pay over two years, creates a joint insurance committee, and defines the school day.

"All the Status of School Supplies"

Idaho ESP can be fired anytime for *no reason*. That's why they're aiming for bargaining rights.

Jesse Tinsley

Chris Greenfield was harassed and reassigned from bus driving because she was an effective NEA Association rep. Her case illustrates why Idaho ESP need a bargaining law.

If you're an education support professional who works under a collective bargaining law, the story of Idaho NEA member Chris Greenfield—and ESP in several other "non-bargaining" states—may strike you as bad fiction.

But if you work in a state where ESPs have all the status of school supplies, Greenfield's long ordeal may strike you *very* close to home.

Greenfield, an Idaho Education Association activist since 1989, quit the Post Falls school district in June. In her resignation letter, she cited "a hostile work environment, numerous job transfers to which I have been subjected," and the resulting "effect on my health."

Post Falls administrators had pushed Greenfield, a single mother of three with 14 years of service, to the edge. Just before she quit, Greenfield was living with anger, "terrible" rashes, anxiety, sleeplessness, and depression.

Small wonder. Over 13 years, this veteran bus driver had endured everything her bosses could dish out—including assignment to broken-down buses, surveillance on the job and after work, and reassignment from driving to a series of make-work jobs without position descriptions or set pay rates.

Greenfield's only sin: She acted like a typical NEA Association rep.

This activist recruited new members, attended state Association meetings, and filed grievances over abuses such as seniority violations and improper pay for new drivers.

"Chris's case is a microcosm of why ESP need a collective bargaining law," says IEA attorney John Rumel, who's handling a lawsuit on Greenfield's behalf—aimed at returning her to her drivers' job and winning both compensatory damages and injunctive relief from discrimination and retaliation.

"A lot of issues raised by Greenfield on the job, like not assigning bus routes on the basis of seniority or other objective criteria, could be *bargained*," Rumel emphasizes.

"There's also the issue of a lack of respect and real due process rights for ESP," he adds. "Our state's ESP grievance mechanism is not powerful. Even if you get a good decision from an arbitration hearing panel, judicial review is deferential toward the school board."

Opponents of ESP bargaining argue that it could produce an avalanche of litigation. Yet Idaho teachers, who have enjoyed bargaining rights since 1971, have showed that these rights potentially open the way for less litigation.

Teachers who have more rights—and who have those rights enforced—"should be able to ferret out and resolve disputes at lower levels," says Rumel, "whereas in Chris Greenfield's case, we have to go to *court* to vindicate an ESP."

"Idaho classified school employees deserve more protection, and the only way to achieve it is through a law that would compel districts to negotiate with us," says Sandra Nalley, registrar at Century High School in Pocatello. "Most districts won't do this by themselves. Superintendents pressure each other not to engage in bargaining with ESP."

That's why delegates to this year's IEA Delegate Assembly voted to push for an ESP collective bargaining law.

Following this lead, Democratic State Representative Bert Marley, a high school teacher and IEA member from Arimo, agreed to sponsor two bills in the 2001 legislative session, one to establish ESP bargaining, and the other—a back-up—to create more limited "meet and confer" rights.

Marley, a "firm believer in bargaining" who helped negotiate his first IEA contract, knew what he was up against: a highly conservative legislature in a union-unfriendly "right to work" state.

"I realized chances for passage of these bills were not good," concedes the ESP legislation's sole sponsor, "but it was the right thing to do. It's only fair that classified employees—regarded now as throwaway people—be represented in communications with their superintendents and school boards."

Earlier this year, a group of IEA

THE BOTTOM LINE

REGISTRATION:
Despite gains made by minority students since the 1960s, a recent Harvard study says schools are becoming more ethnically separated. (www.law.harvard.edu/groups/civilrights)

PARTNERSHIPS:
The number of U.S. school districts participating in school-community partnerships has grown from 51 percent to 69 percent since 1990. (www.partnersineducation.org)

MEDICAID GAPS:
Eighty-one percent of low-income adults—more than 13 million Americans—do not qualify for Medicaid or other public health coverage in their states. (www.familiesusa.org/media/press/2001/medicaid-holes.htm)

MATH SCORES:
According to the federal government's newly released National Assessment of Educational Progress, students in grades four, eight and 12 had higher math scores in 2000 than in 1990. (http://nces.ed.gov)

ESP members—all "at-will" employees who can be fired without a reason at any time—testified before the House Education Committee on the need for collective bargaining and basic rights.

In the opposite corner: note-scribbling administrators and school board members who grimly warned of some Pandora's box opened by bargaining.

One of the bargaining opponents' arguments gave IEA attorney John Rumel the chills. "They basically said, 'We treat our support personnel, well—they don't need rights,'" he recalls.

But ESPs' heartfelt testimony "swayed a lot of legislators," says special ed teaching assistant Connie Jamison, the ESP rep on the IEA governing board. "ESP have testified in the past on the way they're treated, and they've always left a mark."

Evidently so. Representative Marley says he's "pleased and surprised" that one of his ESP bills, the meet and confer measure, made it out of committee to the House floor. It was, unfortunately, smothered by a 20-50 vote.

"We need to keep working it," stresses Marley. But he thinks legislative action on ESP bargaining may need to shift to the state Senate floor—and await Idaho's next election cycle.

But don't expect Idaho ESP to delay their campaign for bargaining and basic rights until the next election. Here and there across the Gem State, support professionals are:

■ **Already bargaining.** Support staffers in two districts, Idaho City and Horseshoe Bend, have won bargaining and negotiated collective agreements—without the benefit of a state law.

■ **Making administrators listen.** Since January, Pocatello ESP have engaged in formal meet and confer discussions with district administrators. And these support staffers intend to keep pushing for full bargaining rights.

■ **Speaking out for rights.** Post Falls ESP activist Chris Greenfield intends to stay active in IEA, pursue her lawsuit, and "test this state's antiquated laws." All unprotected ESP "need to learn their rights and start writing abuses down," she concludes. "If you think what administrators are doing can't be right, you can probably find a law they're violating!" ✔

For updates from the Idaho Education Association, go to www.idahoea.org.

Solidarity in Idaho Wins ESP Contract

Following a path blazed earlier by colleagues in Idaho City, support professionals in Idaho's Horseshoe Bend district united with teachers in 1999, organized, and helped bargain a contract for everyone on campus—without an ESP bargaining law.

Among other features, Horseshoe Bend's 2000-01 master contract boosts the hourly rate of teacher aides to $9.43 after seven years, establishes an ESP probationary period of up to two weeks, guarantees ESP nine days of sick leave a year, and provides medical, dental, and vision care to non-certified staffers who work 20 hours or more a week.

The agreement also requires that the district *"provide notice of re-employment to all non-certified employees by the earliest date."* In the bad old days, "You showed up on the first day of school and hoped they had a job for you," recalls Jeanne Wilfong, an instructional aide at Horseshoe Bend High School.

Making this collective agreement possible: a new school board and ESP-friendly superintendent, lots of community support, and—yes—teacher-ESP solidarity.

"We teachers and ESP rallied together so well that we became a family," says Wilfong, the new vice president of the Horseshoe Bend Education. "Bargaining was new for teachers, too, and we all saw the tie between high Association membership and power.

"Now, you can almost make a living here as an ESP," Wilfong muses. "We've created a great environment, and we're all here for the kids! And having a great administration really makes a difference."

"This is an exceptional group—they know we do trust and have faith in them," says Horseshoe Bend Superintendent Lewis McLin.

"We went through interest-based bargaining together and chose to build trust and look at common issues together," the superintendent points out. "We put everything on the table for all to see, so there was no hidden agenda."

The final agreement meets both staff and district needs, McLin stresses. "And classifieds at last have standards and criteria, just like teachers." ✔

Do'ers Profile SANDRA NALLEY

■ **Name and profession:** Sandra Nalley, high school registrar

■ **NEA local affiliate:** Pocatello (Idaho) Education Association

■ **Position:** Co-chair of Pocatello's ESP Meet and Confer Committee.

■ **A little background:** Alarmed by custodial downgrades and pay cuts in 1999, Nalley—joined by media clerk Sharon Phillips and head secretary Linda Buchli—helped build an ESP Council within the 600-member PEA and focus support staffers on the need to win bargaining rights.

ESP activists then collected confidential bargaining "authorization cards" from 85 percent of Pocatello's support staffers and—with full teacher support—went to work on their school board.

■ **A lot of activity:** Nalley and other ESP met individually with school board members, joined with teachers to pack board meetings, and reached for public support through public TV programs and letters to the editor. While not conceding to collective bargaining, the school board agreed to grant ESP formal "meet and confer" rights in July 2000.

■ **A forum on the issues:** Since January, an ESP Meet and Confer Committee—co-chaired by Nalley and an administrator—has met each month to discuss needs such as pay scales and wage equity. One solid gain so far: The committee has hashed out a RIF policy similar to that enjoyed by teachers.

■ **A vision:** "Our next goal is collective bargaining. We'll continue to show people there is a better way to work together, that bargaining can be positive, not adversarial. It's a hard row to hoe, but it's worth every minute—we're building relationships that should last a lifetime.

"When you have happy employees under the protection of a contract, there's so more excitement and enthusiasm in the workplace. And that benefits everyone."

■ **Advice for action:** "To win bargaining without a law, you've got to just keep going, constantly developing leadership among your members and picking up good support from teachers and the community.

"It's essential that the community people know what's happening in your district. They can and do put pressure on school boards, and boards listen to them."

(Contact Sandra Nalley at nalleysa@ida.net)

REBATE REBELS:
To protest reductions in social services caused by the 2001 federal tax cut, thousands of U.S. taxpayers are giving their tax rebates to community service organizations and other worthy causes. (www.ufenet.org)

TECHNOLOGY:
Despite the rapid infusion of computers into U.S. schools, a new report by Education Week finds that inequities in classroom access to technology remain widespread. (www.edweek.org/sreports)

DRUG COSTS:
While drug companies say high prescription drug prices fund research, a new study says research takes a back seat to profits, marketing, and executive pay. (www.familiesusa.org/media/press/2001/drugceoshtm)

HUMAN RIGHTS:
A new international human rights group—part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization—will report on repression against scholars worldwide. (www.nearinternational.org)

Health Care: Why *You* Should Care

Rising health care costs are taking a bite out of your paycheck and your district's fund for school needs. Here's a prescription for bringing costs in line. . .

Last summer, doctors in Louisville implanted a hard plastic and titanium replacement heart in a middle-aged male. A disturbing sign of the times: While trumpeting this great advance, the hospital refused to "discuss reimbursement for the patient's care" with reporters.

The rising cost of health insurance is a touchy issue for those who provide health care—and a non-issue for too many who receive it.

Al Dobson, who helps NEA and its state affiliates negotiate the landmine issues surrounding health care, concludes that while Americans want the best care, in general they don't want to pay for it.

"In principle, people think health insurance cost control is a laudable goal, but not for them," says Dobson. "Cost control is a perfectly wonderful idea until you, or someone you love, gets sick. Then you want as much health care as you can possibly get from the best hospitals and best physicians. People don't want their care controlled."

That's a big problem, Dobson notes, because health insurance costs —and hence premiums—are likely to rise faster than wages over the next 10 years. Two costs alone, technology and prescription drugs, could ensure that.

The rising price of health care hits home when school districts and their employees try to figure out how they'll spend resources, says Stan Wisniewski, head of NEA's Office of Compensation and Collective Bargaining.

"Sometimes districts cope by cutting coverage or other benefits in existing insurance plans," he says. The result can be cuts in coverage for education employees and/or their family members, higher co-pays on drugs and office visits, or restricted choice of health care providers.

And, sadly, each nickel spent on health care insurance is a nickel the school district can't spend on textbooks, computers, or salaries.

How can we as an Association work to reduce or moderate health care increases? Here's some advice from the Association experts:

1. Build strength through numbers. One good strategy for combating rising health care costs is building the size of the insured pool.

If you're in a plan with a small number of other school employees, chances are excellent that your premiums and other costs associated with health insurance run higher than those paid by participants in larger plans.

Across the United States, hundreds of relatively small school districts—from fewer than 100 up to 400 employees—try to negotiate health care insurance with multibillion-dollar insurance companies.

The result: a high degree of disparity among types of coverage offered to employees in those districts. Too often, educators may be getting different costs and benefits from the *same* insurance carriers.

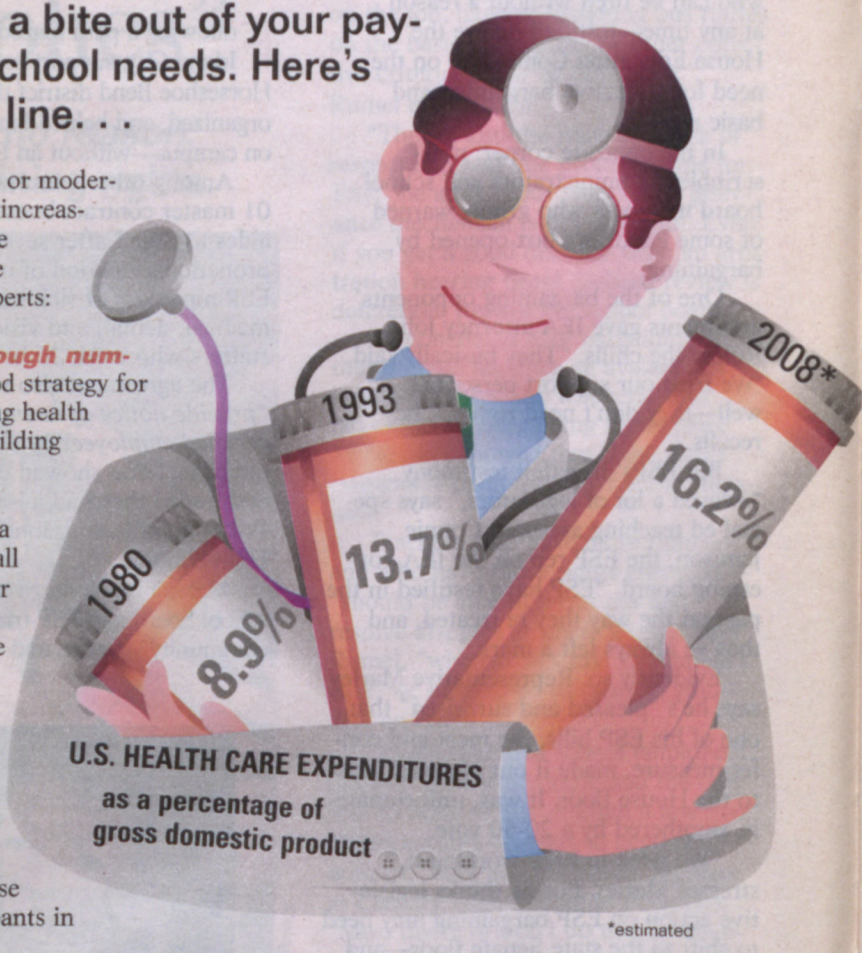
To build health care buying power, more and more NEA state affiliate leaders and elected officials are investigating statewide insurance plans for school-related employees. Some states, such as Alabama, Kentucky, Maine and New Jersey, already have such plans.

In Kentucky and New Jersey, public education employees comprise only one part of a larger state employee purchasing pool. The Alabama and Maine programs purchase health care benefits only for persons employed in public education.

But every state's different. Idaho's major insurance plan covers 90 of the state's 112 school districts. But the largest Idaho districts have their own plans, leaving only about half of the state's school employees in the big pool.

Consequently, Idaho health care insurance costs last year rose from 15 percent in some districts to 50 percent in others. This year, increases were smaller, but still significant at 10 to 20 percent.

Says Idaho Education Association Executive Director Jim Shackelford: "The pressure on our leaders, administrators, and school boards to make hard choices between reducing benefits or increasing salaries is just extraordinary. And what's so hard is there's no promise of any major change in sight."



Illustrations: Marthe Roberts/Shea: Taxi Graphics

Factors Behind Health Cost Increases

Why are health insurance premiums increasing so swiftly? Many factors contribute, some of which have been around for years. Others have arisen with new developments in the practice of medicine and patients' care expectations. Here's a partial list:

Old cost drivers:

- Consumer demands
- Oversupply of beds/specialists
- Poor quality medical care
- High administrative costs
- Fraud and abuse

New cost drivers:

- Pressure on health plan profitability
- Emerging medical technology
- Pharmaceutical costs and utilization
- Consumer demands
- Managed care reform

"Labor and management need to understand the fact that as health insurance premiums increase, wages tend to decrease."

—Gregg Gascon
Ohio Education Association

2. Build health care coalitions. "This problem is not something we can solve all by ourselves," points out Shackelford.

"The good thing is school boards and superintendents have exactly the same interests in this area as we do," he adds. "This process is all about building relationships among administrations, school boards and teacher leaders. We've also received tremendous help from NEA in sorting out our situation and identifying options."

Lynn Ohman, NEA director of Collective Bargaining and Member Advocacy, also knows the value of everyone working together. She participated in a joint NEA-American Federation of Teachers health care conference this spring in Washington, D.C.

"Negotiators, government relations staff and local leaders from 33 states met with national experts to learn about up-to-date health insurance purchasing strategies," Ohman reports. "By working together, NEA and AFT created the potential for more overall progress in negotiating health care benefits for education."

Ohio Education Association staffer Gregg Gascon adds: "The control of health care costs is a *collaborative* effort. Labor and management need to understand the full consequences of the fact that as health insurance premiums increase, wages tend to decrease. After all, you don't retire on your insurance, but on your final average salary."

3. Educate both NEA members and administrators. Many NEA state affiliates understand the widespread lack of public information on the intricacies of health care.

The Idaho Education Association, for one, is planning a series of annual health care forums, aimed at school district insurance committee members who bear much of the responsibility for finding the best insurance plans. These people, drawn from both Association and administrator ranks, advise bargaining teams on monitoring claims and usage, and encourage colleagues to use health care policies wisely.

According to IEA's Shackelford, an important part of this training will be on reading information provided by insurance companies. Insurance committee members can then try to make sense of how coverage needs to be changed—and can consider the implications of changing insurance companies.

You can teach yourself more about your own health plan by reading and understanding its coverage. Plans vary dramatically.

And don't forget to check your hospital bill. Double billings and charges for services not provided are common. Some insurance companies offer cash rewards to patients who find errors in their bills.

Finally, be alert to medical developments that may have significant implications for you and others in your insurance pool, such as the proposed Patients' Bill of Rights, now pending in Congress. ✔

For more background on health care, visit these Web sites:

- www.census.gov/hhes/www/hlthins.html
- www.ncqa.org/
- www.aflcio.org/healthcare/
- www.nchc.org/
- www.facct.org
- www.familiesusa.org.

Seminar Scheduled

This spring, NEA and the American Federation of Teachers jointly sponsored a health care seminar for bargainers and lobbyists. Due to tremendous response from participants, the seminar will be offered again, on October 10-11 in San Diego, California. The meeting will be preceded by a "health care basics" session on October 9.

For registration information, go to www.aft.org/research/hot_news/NEAft/

An Unhealthy Situation for ESP

For too many education support professionals, health care costs are painful and just plain shameful.

Ohio Education Association Labor Relations Consultant Ann Field, who works with a consortium of 11 northern Ohio districts, notes that many of the region's part-time ESPs take their jobs simply to gain access to their district's health care plan.

Unfortunately, costs have risen so dramatically over the last couple of years that some employees, primarily cafeteria workers earning about $7 per hour, actually end up *owing* their district money at the end of the month.

"Their premiums went from $428 per month last year for family coverage to $738 this year, and they're looking at another 30 percent increase soon," Field says.

"These employees aren't making enough money to pay the premium," she notes. "The different districts have the same plans but different caps on how much the districts will pay. At the end of the pay period, some end up owing the school money."

Field does not know what will happen next. Even if ESP bargain a 3 or 4 percent salary increase, that won't make up for another hit in their health premiums. ✔

Prescriptions for Trouble

The increases in prescription drug use and prices are among the many variables behind rising health care costs. Some things to know:

- **The cost of an average prescription was $3 in 1970, $7 in 1980, and $25 in 1990. The average in 2001 is $65.**
- **Pharmaceutical companies spend huge amounts of money on advertising, a cost passed on to users and insurers.**
- **According to Blue Cross/Blue Shield, "The average number of new chemical compounds introduced each year in the U.S. has doubled since 1960." Often, newly developed drugs replace older, cheaper ones.**
- **The American population is aging, and older people require more drugs for conditions that are often chronic.**

RIGHTS WATCH

Students Grading Teachers

Can a competent, tenured teacher be fired solely on the basis of student evaluations? A famous Nebraska school thinks so, but a federal court says "no."

Immortalized in the 1938 Spencer Tracy movie *Boys Town*, Father Flanagan's Boys Home is well known for its unique mission to house and educate troubled youth.

But the nonprofit school's treatment of NEA member Michael Mullins was, well, somewhat less than charitable.

The school fired him in 1999—despite glowing administrator and peer evaluations of his job performance—solely because a handful of students gave him poor marks on an anonymous student survey.

Teachers at Boys Home are evaluated in eleven categories of job performance. Administrators and co-workers conduct the evaluation in ten of the areas. The 11th category, "Student Satisfaction," is the product of a student questionnaire. The teacher has to score at least a 6.0 on a 7-point scale in each of the 11 categories in order to "meet expectations" and be rehired.

Mullins had taught 11th grade English at the Omaha, Nebraska, school since 1984. And by all accounts, he was a stellar teacher.

On his 1998-99 evaluation, fellow teachers and his principal gave Mullins almost perfect ratings in the ten categories of job performance they assessed.

But the kids—for whatever reason—didn't see it that way. In two "Student Satisfaction" surveys during that year, Mullins fell a fraction short of the magic 6.0 figure, scoring 5.57 and 5.74.

While most of the students gave him superior marks, others flunked him, skewing the survey results.

Their complaints? "He gives us too much homework"; he's "too pleasant and positive"; he should show "more movies" in class; and "he talks funny and doesn't have no humor."

So the school board voted not to renew the contract of the 15-year veteran teacher. The only reason given was his failure to achieve the 6.0 score on the two student evaluations.

Upset but undaunted, Mullins turned to his union for help, and the Boys Town Education Association filed a grievance over the termination.

The school argued that under the collective bargaining agreement, it had the right to terminate a teacher after two unsatisfactory performance evaluations.

The union countered that the bargaining agreement also prohibited the school from dismissing employees for "arbitrary and capricious" reasons,

In an October 1999 decision, Arbitrator Michael Gordon sided with the union and ruled that the nonrenewal was "arbitrary and capricious" because it was based solely on student evaluations.

"The core defect," Gordon wrote, "is not the Home's professional judgment about [Mullins] but the fact it ceded that judgment exclusively to an anonymous, non-validated student questionnaire."

Gordon noted that many of the students "are emotionally troubled, educationally disadvantaged and inexperienced in responsible decision making." The arbitrator said it was "unreasonable" for the school to rely on "student surveys about 'satisfaction' levels" to justify firing Mullins, particularly where the school's own trained professionals gave him great marks.

The arbitrator ordered the school to reinstate Mullins with back pay and benefits.

The school then asked a federal judge to throw out the arbitrator's award. But U.S. District Court Judge Joseph Bataillon refused, declaring that the arbitrator acted well within his authority in ruling that Mullins' termination was arbitrary and capricious and violated the contract.

Father Flanagan's Boys Home then appealed the decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, which upheld the arbitrator's ruling in Mullins's favor.

The Boys Home decision likely will have only limited precedential value because the court simply upheld an arbitrator's interpretation of a collective bargaining agreement.

Nevertheless, the case sends a clear message to school employers that they shouldn't base employment decisions solely on student evaluations. ✔

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

"Viagra" ruling expands women's rights

In a decision with profound implications for the reproductive freedom rights of female workers nationwide, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) ruled last December that an employer's health insurance plan must cover prescription contraceptives for women if the plan covers other prescription drugs such as Viagra.

The EEOC declared that the failure to provide such coverage is illegal under the federal Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA). The PDA applies to all school districts and colleges and universities.

NEA joined with a coalition of some 65 organizations represented by the National Women's Law Center in petitioning the EEOC for the ruling.

Citing the EEOC decision, a federal court in Seattle last June became the first in the nation to find an employer guilty of discrimination for failing to include prescription contraceptives in its health care plan.

Ruling in favor of Jennifer Erickson, a pharmacist at Bartell Drug Co., Judge Robert Lasnik said, "Although the plan covers almost all drugs and devices used by men, the exclusion of prescription contraceptives creates a gaping hole in the coverage offered to female employees, leaving a fundamental and immediate healthcare need uncovered."

The National Women's Law Center has prepared a brochure titled "Take Action" that provides employees with practical advice about how to obtain coverage for prescription contraceptives from their employers. It's posted at www.nwlc.org/pill4us/index.cfm.

The EEOC decision is posted at www.eeoc.gov/docs/decision-contraception.html.

M.D.S.

Supreme Court Goes to School

In a surprising move that may affect many teachers' classroom procedures, the U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to decide whether teachers can allow students to grade each other's tests.

As reported in the November 2000 *NEA Today*, the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals last year ruled that the common practice of peer grading violates a federal privacy statute known as FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. That's a 27-year-old law that prohibits schools from disclosing a student's "education records" without parental consent.

The appellate court said that students' test scores are education records and can't be disclosed to third parties—including other students.

Complaining that "our teachers are overworked and underpaid now," a dissenting judge warned, "What will happen to them when they can be sued by every irate parent or student claiming that someone saw a grade?"

The *Washington Post* applauded the Supreme Court's decision to enter the fray and urged the Justices to "correct this ridiculous holding." NEA will be filing an *amicus* brief urging reversal of the lower court decision.

The case, *Owasso* (Oklahoma) *Independent School District* v. *Falvo*, will be argued this fall, and a decision is expected sometime after the first of the year.

M.D.S.

INTERVIEW

Top Teacher Tackles Testing

Teacher of the Year Michele Forman questions 'obsession with testing.'

Craig Line

Michele Forman doesn't waste any time. The morning this spring that she was introduced to the world as the 2001 National Teacher of the Year, Forman was speaking out on the dangers of high-stakes testing in an interview on National Public Radio. Born in Mississippi, Forman received a bachelor's degree from Brandeis University and a master's from the University of Vermont. A social studies teacher in Middlebury, Vermont, Forman met with *NEA Today*'s Alain Jehlen and Tom Nordby.

You say you want students to feel less bound by rigid learning expectations. What does that mean?

Part of that is our obsession with testing; part is strict, mandated curricula. We need to articulate curriculum and coordinate it so it makes sense. But when it becomes so prescriptive that it leaves the teacher few alternatives for creativity, when teachers feel bound to cover issues to the degree that we can't stop and explore, that's destructive.

When you listen to students and follow some of their leads—not every single one, of course—but when you listen and let those voices direct your teaching, you can have extraordinary results.

Illustrate that with a story, will you?

Years ago I took students to Washington, D.C. One named Holly had never been out of Vermont. We went to the Lincoln Memorial and the sun was setting. We're reading the words in the stone, and Holly looks up at Lincoln and says, "Wow! I wish we had history where we live."

Now that's a voice I needed to listen to. We went back to Vermont and swept the plate for the next quarter, suspended regular classroom activities. With a supportive administrator and parents, we set out to become historians of our county. Students started with oral histories and became fascinated by old farm buildings. They took pictures, read old diaries, newspapers, county fair programs. They produced an account of agricultural history, which is now part of a permanent collection in a museum.

Are you comfortable talking about political issues?

The closer you get to teaching and classroom experience, the more comfortable I am. I speak from classroom experience, not only my own, but others, also informed by research. One of the privileges of being National Teacher of the Year is I'm not politically controlled. I'm not censored. I speak from the heart as a teacher.

What do you think of vouchers?

I can support vouchers if and when schools receiving them make it possible for any child to attend and the vouchers don't take money away from public education. Many voucher plans don't do those things. We know that most schools receiving vouchers have the privilege of saying "We won't take this child, we don't want that child." I'm a staunch proponent of public education. I'm not opposed to private school or to home education. But I believe the greatest hope we have for educating our young is through public education.

What do you think when you hear politicians talk about "failing public schools?"

We concentrate on failings in any area, whether it's politicians or educators or industry. We could concentrate on what we're doing right and how to make it better.

This is a time of rapid change. In any period like this, it's easy to criticize failings because in trying things, we make mistakes. Or when we don't change things rapidly, that's viewed as failure. I'd rather look at our successes. I'm proud we're educating more students, a higher percentage of students, better than ever. We're keeping them in the system longer, and teaching them more than rote memorization.

Still, others paint the "public school system" broadly as failing.

There's a punitive strain that some want to put on education that isn't helpful. Look, I'm a diabetic. When I go to my endocrinologist and my tests don't look good, I don't fire the endocrinologist.

Do we adequately invest in and truly honor education?

We certainly aren't investing in teacher education to nearly the extent we should. There's a great deal of respect for teachers. There's less for education. When people talk about education they'll say, "Yeah, America's schools are failing us. But my kids' school isn't so bad."

Because I'm National Teacher of the Year, people approach me and I recognize the look at 20 paces now. They're adoring. They want to hold my hand and tell me about their fourth grade teacher who believed in them. Many people relate at a deep level with a teacher who cared and made a difference.

Explain your view of teacher accountability.

It's related to raising standards. All teachers must meet high standards because that's what's necessary to ensure every child has a qualified, competent teacher. There are other reasons. We must require high standards for all teachers if we want to raise the prestige of our profession and attract larger numbers of talented, dedicated people.

The National Board Certification model is an excellent way to assess teachers fairly and reliably. The portfolio model is much more meaningful than the current licensure standards in most states.

I'd also abolish teaching license waivers. You don't want to drive over a bridge designed by an engineer operating on a waiver. My daughter's in med school—she won't be allowed to practice on a waiver. The people who treat my dogs and cut my hair can't work on waivers. Why do we accept waivers for teachers? ✔

RESOURCES

- For more information on the National Teacher of the Year program, visit the Web at www.ccsso.org/ntoylist.html
- For comprehensive, state-by-state information on high-stakes testing, visit comprehensive: www.gse.upenn.edu/cpre/docs/pubs/profiles.html.
- FairTest, the National Center for Fair and Open Testing, offers a Web site that links people working for alternatives to high-stakes tests at www.fairtest.org.

Cofer

Best Practices in Math Teaching

A new guide is grounded in classroom reality

Joe Mahoney

When the School of Education of the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia set out to create a best practices guide for math teachers, it sought out front-line teachers to participate in the process.

Knowing how theoretical and sometimes impractical guidelines, checklists, and rubrics can be, **Rachael Cofer** jumped at the chance to contribute her real-world experience. Cofer teaches math at LaFayette High School in Williamsburg.

Working with other math teachers, administrators, and professors, Cofer helped William and Mary produce a rubric that not only meets the standards of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, but has been hailed by teachers around the country for its fairness and teacher-friendly structure. The guide is for both elementary and high school.

"It's intended to educate teachers about best practices in math classrooms, rather than to evaluate the teacher," says Cofer. "The focus is on development. Each page makes clear that it is not an evaluation instrument."

She adds, "Today, some teachers are evaluated only according to their kids' test scores. That can mask many factors beyond the teachers' control. Other teachers are asked to stick to a firm checklist, which limits their ability to adapt teaching methods to particular types of students.

"This professional rubric solves both of those problems," says Cofer. "It's an objective picture of best practices at the elementary, middle school, and high school level. And schools are encouraged to modify it to fit their own learning environment."

Ideally, Cofer notes, this rubric will contribute to the teaching of mathematics in four main ways. First, new teachers can use it immediately for guidance, so they don't come to the classroom in the dark.

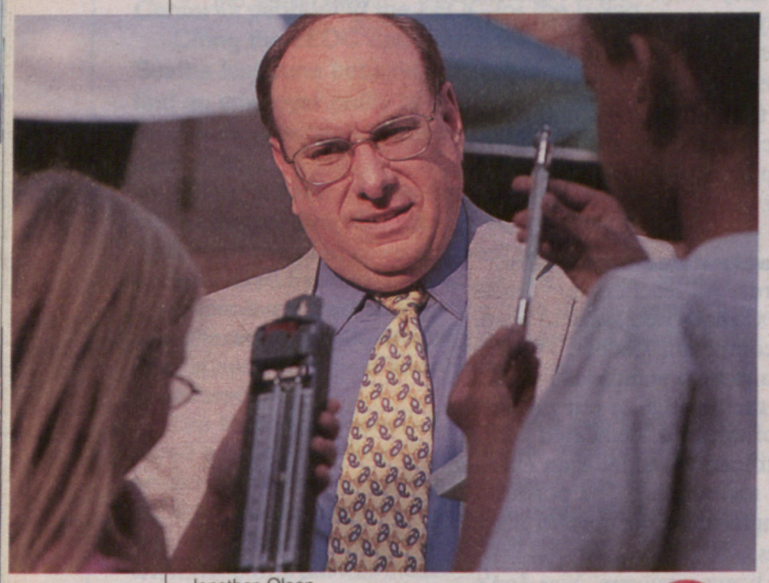
Second, experienced teachers can use it to hone their skills by identifying areas where they may need training.

Third, principals who are asked to observe math classes may not have a math background, and this rubric gives them a solid foundation for observation.

And fourth, administrators and math specialists can use it to make policies throughout school systems."

The rubric was presented at a conference of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics this year. "The response was wonderful," says Cofer. "Teachers from California wanted to go back home and develop something similar. Others just asked us to hurry up and get the rubric out in print, which I think will happen soon."

For More: Contact Marguerite Mason, School of Education, College of William and Mary, at 757/221-2327 or E-mail mmmaso@wm.edu. E-mail Rachael Cofer at rcofer@widomaker.com.



Jonathan Olson

Sopelak

Hail the Weather Station

Kenneth Sopelak never intended to be a weather junkie. But it turned out to be a good idea that took him by storm.

He now coordinates a weather station at Webster Hill Elementary in West Hartford, Connecticut that links to more than 400 television stations, other elementary and secondary schools, and government facilities across the country.

"When I started, I knew very little about weather," says Sopelak. "I got so engrossed, I was soon working 50-hour weeks. I saw that teachers can use technology in class for things other than research, writing, and drills."

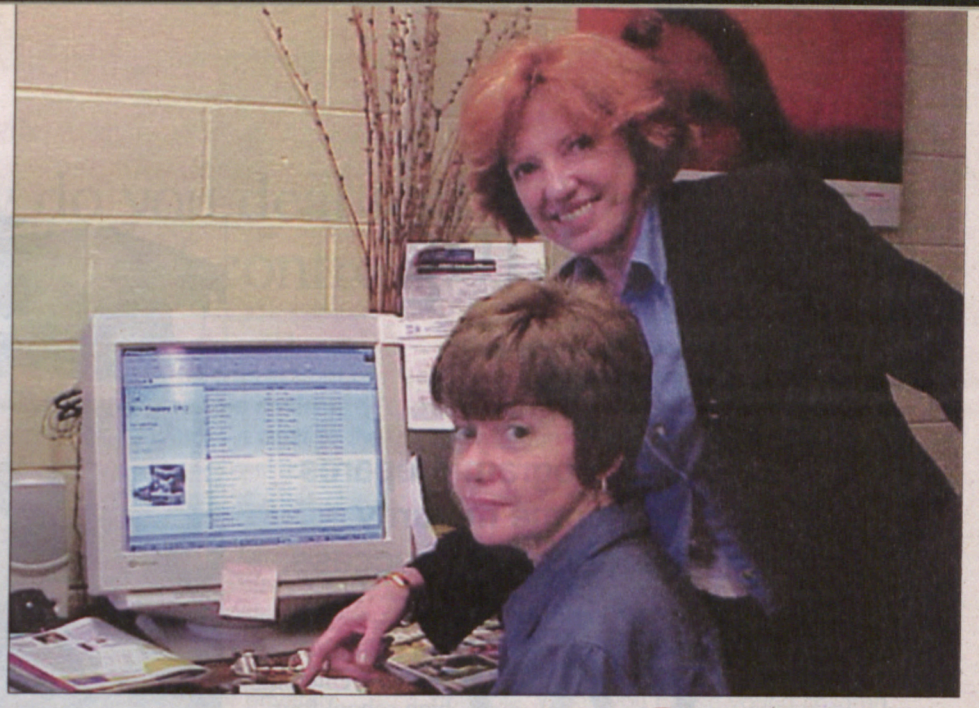
One student from Africa, Leeban Isa, became interested in the station when he learned that many storms get their start off Africa's west coast. Checking satellite photos, Isa discovered a small storm near his homeland in the fall of 2000. From the data, he predicted it would grow strong and strike New England—and he was right. Local weather buffs nicknamed the storm "Leeban."

Sopelak's meteorological turn started when parents and staff turned a weedy school courtyard into a living classroom, complete with monarch butterfly house and compost station. Sopelak helped to raise $7,000 for the weather station. Then, with a grant from the NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education he learned to use it.

Sopelak has developed materials on elementary weather activities linking meteorology, math, writing, geography, and critical thinking. He gives workshops on using weather stations to foster learning and community involvement.

For More: E-mail kensopelak@msn.com.

Harnessing the Internet



In 1998, longtime friends and veteran educators **Eileen Skarecki** and **Elaine Insinnia** combined their expertise to write *Educators Take Charge: Teaching in the Internet Revolution*, published by the International Society for Technology in Education. The book shows the Internet is not just a reference resource, but a dynamic teaching tool.

Skarecki, a technology coordinator, and Insinnia, an eighth grade English teacher, both at Columbia Middle School in Berkeley Heights, New Jersey, have worked together for 16 years. Insinnia credits Skarecki with introducing her to the "magic" of the Internet.

"We both have drama backgrounds, and we've co-directed plays," says Insinnia. "In 1994, we were directing *The Miracle Worker.* I had very little information on it to share with the students. Eileen said, 'Let's check the Web.' It turned out to be a gold mine. That's how we started collaborating. We began to give presentations on teaching with the Internet at school. Soon we were writing articles and traveling to give workshops."

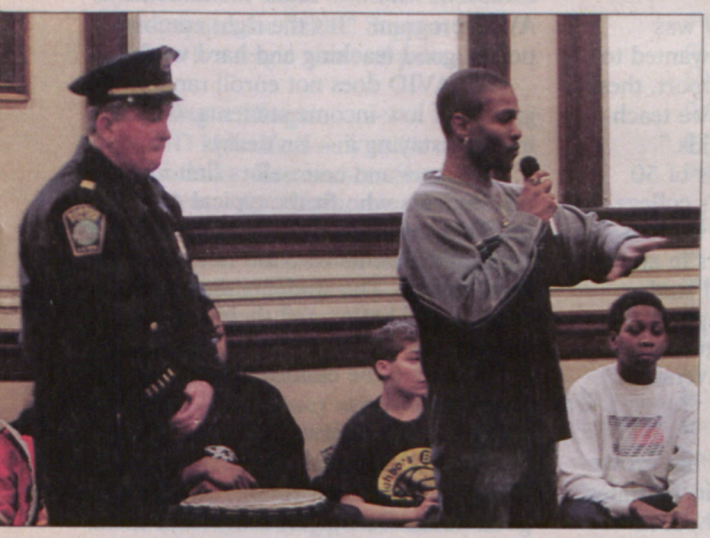
"I know the technical side, and Elaine knows how to motivate students," says Skarecki. "We've been able to introduce kids to a whole new realm of learning."

Insinnia adds, "We found a Web site where Arthur Miller talks about playwriting. So the students weren't limited by my knowledge. They had Arthur Miller."

"The technology is constantly changing," says Skarecki. "Elaine and I plan to keep up with it and to keep helping others harness technology to improve their teaching."

Skarecki & Insinnia

For More: To order the book, call 800/336-5191. For information on training workshops by the authors, call 800/942-6124, access code 61, or E-mail Skarecki at esp@columbia.bhs.k12.nj.us.



Robert Howard Jr.

Pounding the Beat Of Social Justice

When **Robert Howard Jr.,** *a 26-year-old African-American teacher at Boston's Young Achievers Science and Mathematics Pilot School, was twice stopped on his way to school and frisked by police—though he did not fit the description of any suspect the police were pursuing—his students wanted answers. Howard filed a complaint against the policeman involved in both incidents, but he also turned the situation into an upbeat, positive lesson for his students.*

How did the school react to what happened to you?

My principal, Virginia Chalmers, the other teachers, and the students were great to me. Before I knew it, they'd planned a Valentine's Day demonstration to support me. The kids hand-painted signs with messages such as "Love has no color," and planned to march to police headquarters. They were with me from the start, and they stayed with me.

What concerned you about the planned protest?

I didn't want the kids or the community to think it was a police-bashing protest. I don't hate police, and I don't want my kids to hate police. I knew I had to help keep the situation balanced. I couldn't just indulge my own outrage and let these kids think police are evil—any one of them might need the help of the police at any time.

How did you deal with that concern?

We invited the police to talk to our students about what happened. Before the rally took place, I participated with Boston Police Captain Frederick Daniels in leading a student assembly. Daniels defended the police actions, but apologized to me for the "inconvenience" I experienced.

Was that sufficient, in your eyes?

It was good to get this all out in the open. If there was any racism, the students still need to know that racism doesn't control us. We're empowering students to change society.

I still have a complaint pending. And when there is progress on the complaint, I'm going to let the kids know about it, no matter what the outcome. They've been on the journey with me, they'll be with me when it's over, and I plan to make sure that only good comes out of it.

For More: E-mail YoungAchievers@Boston.K12.ma.us.

Voices from The Front Lines

"I know how to discipline kids, but I feel like every day, something arises that I never thought would happen in a million years," says a young teacher. "I wish I had someone to coach me along."

"If you want teachers to grow, you must do it when they're fresh," says an 11-year veteran. "You must create time for them so they don't feel it's another thing to weigh them down."

Both educators are speaking in a videotape produced by the Utah Education Association's director of Teaching and Learning, Kaye Chatterton, to stimulate discussion at a state conference that she helped organize.

The conference, co-sponsored by state education and teacher training agencies, delved into the topic of what can be done to make sure there are quality teachers staffing every classroom. Chatterton wanted the 300 participants, mostly school administrators and people running teacher training programs, to hear from classroom educators.

The tape features five teachers at varying points in their careers, talking about what they need to do a quality job. "It showcases that we are never done learning, and that there are different stages at which we have different professional development needs," says Chatterton.

The teachers interviewed for the tape were "very honest without being whiney," she says. And their views incapsulate the sentiments of teachers nationwide.

"Each educator has something really important to say, and you can see and hear their commitment to students," says Chatterton.

"They make you proud to be a teacher."

For More: Contact Nancy Pereira (nancy.pereira@utea.org) for a copy of the tape, or E-mail Chatterton at kaye.chatterton@utea.org for details on information about it.

Breaking Barriers

AVID program prepares low-income minority kids for college success.

Paul Body

Every one of Jan Parkinson's San Diego AVID students is going to college.

When Claudia Arellano entered high school four years ago, she had her sights set on becoming a hairdresser. "When you are poor and minority, you just want to get through school without too much hassle," says the 18-year-old in heavily accented English. "I came to America from Mexico when I was nine. My parents both work. College was never a consideration."

But this fall, Claudia and hundreds of students like her are enrolling in universities such as Cornell, Pennsylvania State, and, for Claudia, the University of California, Berkeley. Almost all will be the first in their families to attend college.

They are graduates of AVID, Advancement Via Individual Determination, a small but growing initiative in middle and high schools across the country to prepare mainly minority students with mediocre records for the rigors of advanced education.

Since its inception in 1980, 93 percent of the more than 20,000 AVID graduates have gone on to college.

AVID began in 1980 at suburban San Diego's Clairemont High School, after a federal court desegregation order siphoned off half of the all-white student body. Arriving to fill their seats were low-income Latino and African-American students.

Nervous that they might automatically be placed in remedial classes, NEA member Mary Catherine Swanson—then English department chairwoman—created AVID.

"A lot of people thought I was crazy," Swanson says, "but I wanted to prove that with rigor and support, these students could achieve what we teachers expected from our own kids."

She enrolled her first class of 30 AVID students in the school's college preparatory curriculum, and worked with them daily for four years in an hour-long course that offered study skills, tutoring, and moral support. In 1984, 28 of the original 30 graduated and went on to four-year universities.

It's not magic

Twenty years later, AVID has grown to more than 1,000 schools in 16 states.

At Cedar Grove High School in Ellenwood, Georgia, where 98 percent of students are African-American, all of the school's 2001 AVID graduates are now in college. At Atherton High School in Louisville, Kentucky, only one AVID student didn't go to college.

What's the secret?

"I have no magic to sell," says Swanson, who now leads the national AVID program. "It's the right combination of good teaching and hard work."

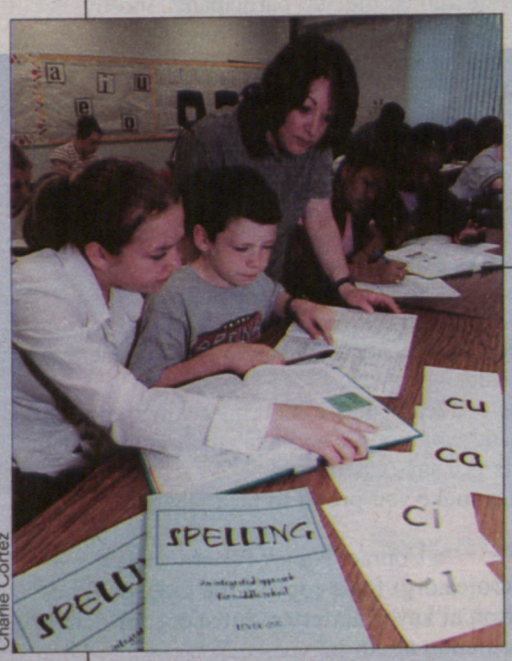
But AVID does not enroll random groups of low-income students. Getting in—and staying in—isn't easy.

Teachers and counselors first identify students who fit the typical AVID profile: *C* average, no behavior problems, and parents who did not graduate from college. The students must show a desire to do better, and their parents must sign a contract agreeing to help.

These are the children AVID has been able to help.

Once accepted, students are placed in a daily AVID class where they are taught, among other things, how to take good notes. College students tutor them at least three periods a week.

"Even a *D* student who is willing to work hard can be college material," says Swanson. "We're particularly good at helping kids who don't know English well learn it quickly. If a student tells us



Charlie Cortez

How I Did It

Nancy Beattie
Pierce Middle School
Sixth grade teacher
Redford, Michigan

Middle school students catch on to spelling with a program that goes beyond rote memorization.

After seeing unsuccessful results from the spelling program used in my own class, I wanted to create a program that would work better than just writing and memorizing words in isolation week after week.

I decided to include words students actually read and use in school, and skills important for middle school students to review.

Phonics and spelling rules became the basis for my program. I wanted to help students learn these rules and letter patterns, and recognize them in other words when reading on their own.

Our spelling word list was generated from three areas.

First, it made sense to include words that students hear and read in their classes. So I asked core, exploratory, music, and gym teachers from several districts to send lists of recommended words.

Second, I looked at troublesome words—words children often write yet frequently misspell.

Third, I included words commonly written in middle school.

With these three lists, I was ready to begin.

they are willing to try, we ask them to prove it."

To get into AVID at Atherton High School in Kentucky, students must get teacher recommendations, answer ten essay questions, and interview with a faculty team. Once in, they must keep up their grades, attendance, and behavior.

"It's about pushing the average kid to go further, and not all kids want to be pushed," says Richard Guetig, a science teacher and coordinator for the AVID program there. "The program can also be hard on a student's ego," he adds. "Many go from getting *A*s and *B*s in a regular class to getting *C*s in advanced placement."

At Georgia's Cedar Grove High School, being in AVID is a source of pride, says Faatimah Muhammad, a science teacher and AVID coordinator. "It's become 'cool' to be smart."

At Mira Mesa High School in San Diego, AVID coordinator Jan Parkinson says, "Many of my students had never been on a college campus, or seen a play. They didn't realize there was more to life than their own neighborhood."

"AVID provides rigor and support," says Swanson. "Rigor without support is a prescription for failure. Support without rigor is a tragic waste of potential."

Finishing college

AVID kids don't only enter college, they graduate. Researchers from Palo Alto's Center for Research and Evaluation in Education found that 84 percent of California's AVID students complete college.

According to the national AVID office, the start-up cost is about $640 per student but falls to $170 by the third year. The money covers teacher training, tutors, and field trips to college campuses and cultural centers.

"This program is not a panacea, but it works," says Georgia's Muhammad. "It gives teachers the framework to help their students succeed. That's what any teacher wants." ✔

—Dina S. Gómez

For More: Visit www.avidcenter.org.

In every spelling lesson, students practice many skills while writing sentences. For example, we practice compound sentences in lessons 3, 7, 11, and 19. We practice possessives in lessons 2, 8, 12, and 16.

We review 24 skills such as writing prefixes, suffixes, antonyms, synonyms, and dates. Definitions and examples for these skills are on a page called "Writing Reminders" to help promote success in completing the spelling lessons correctly.

For information on* Spelling—An Integrated Approach for Middle School, *call 248/689-5317 or E-mail bteducationalprog @home.com.

[DILEMMA]

How do you deal with a class that has spun out of control?

I pull out my cell phone (our class phones don't dial out), call their parents in front of their classmates, and have the students explain their behavior. I make it clear to the parents that I am calling during class. Pulling out the cell phone gets the class silent every time!

Jarrad Grandy
History teacher
Grand Rapids, Michigan

■ If the noisiest students are energetic but unaware, I discuss their behavior privately with them and ask them to take a leadership role or work privately on a project. Other students who act out may be disconnected or afraid they'll fail. I arrange for them to come for tutoring or to discuss their interests and goals. A phone call to parents often reveals why usually cooperative students are suddenly out of control: Grandma dying, or parents divorcing, perhaps.

When a whole class won't cooperate, try something different—mix up activities, bring in a visitor, act mysterious. Sometimes, I've asked ninth and tenth graders to spend a few days in class with older students where the younger ones can observe more serious behavior.

Jacque Fitzgerald
High school counselor
Anderson, California

■ Every teacher has days when lessons go wrong and 24 angels turn into 24 wild things. Don't throw up your hands or consider leaving the profession!

Go with the flow. Forget quiet reading and seatwork. Harness that energy into cooperative learning.

Get out chart paper, markers, and paints, and divide students into small groups. Assign them something related to your original lesson. Hopefully, you have used this sort of set-up before, when your class was more tuned in.

Set a time frame to help them focus, and use the remainder of the period for group presentations.

Textbook reading, written questions, or worksheets can be sent home as homework, or saved for a quieter day.

Mary Lea
Second grade teacher
Jefferson, Wisconsin

■ When it seems students are about to get "wiggly," I lead them in yoga breathing and postures. After they get used to this, they often request the activity when they aren't able to focus.

Jean Dodge
Resource teacher
El Paso, Texas

■ When a class has spun out of control, I look for children who are obeying the rules and praise them, ignoring the rest as much as possible. When you praise young children, they do their best.

Scotty Price
Second grade teacher
Ashburn, Georgia

■ I am a substitute teacher. I work in two buildings and I know the children well.

I leave the regular teacher a list of helpful and not-so-helpful students. My students know all about "The List."

When they do something inappropriate, I have a one-on-one and explain why their name is going on the not-so-helpful list.

When they see Mrs. Livermore, they know that everything they do, good or bad, will be revealed.

If the class becomes so unmanageable that students aren't learning, I have them lay their heads down or write. This works because most students don't want to write.

Teresa Livermore
Substitute teacher
Lansing, Michigan

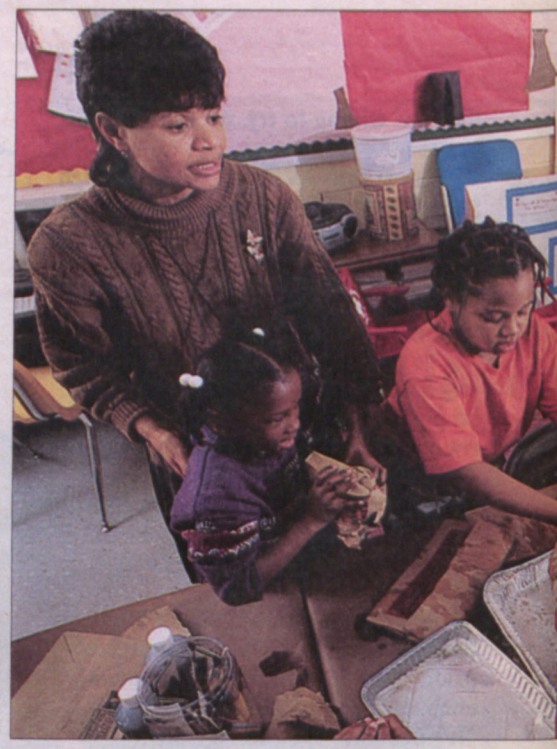
■ When a class is out of control, I walk to the board and write a message. It conveys my expectations (sit down, be quiet) and the consequences (detention/staying after class). I make sure one student notices the message and observe as the class follows my direction.

Lisa McGrath Bogolin
Middle school reading teacher
Hedgesville, West Virginia

Got an Answer?

What do you do when you think a student has cheated on an exam?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Please include your name, city, state, and job title. Published respondents will receive an *NEA Today* mug!



Photos by Scott Suchman

Arts Across the Curriculum

At a Maryland magnet school, teachers are learning from the prestigious Kennedy Center how to use the arts to teach . . . everything.

It's a safe bet to expect high achievement at the Thomas G. Pullen Creative and Performing Arts Magnet School in Landover, Maryland. But never expect the ordinary.

In any of this K-8 school's classrooms, you might find students acting out a drama, doing a square dance, or painting—even if the subject they're studying is math or science.

Pullen's strategy is to infuse the arts into the teaching of all subjects, and teachers are learning how to do that through Changing Education Through the Arts, a program of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

Pullen is one of eight Washington-area schools taking part in A Change of Course, a grant program from The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education that helps to fund this Kennedy Center initiative.

"We studied drama, instrumental and vocal music, dance, and the visual arts," says Judie Strawbridge, who teaches third grade at Pullen.

"Then we took part in group activities to learn how to integrate the arts into everything: language arts, social studies—even math."

Westward expansion and the arts

Strawbridge and several of her colleagues had a chance to put their new skills into action this past school year when Pullen third graders studied the U.S. westward expansion as a social studies assignment.

"This was hard work," says Strawbridge. "But it made teaching more fun. This was not about kids getting to play instead of doing social studies. Every single detail of the standard social studies curriculum had to be included.

"It was quite a challenge for us, but it came off wonderfully."

Pullen drama teachers had the students write a play about the westward expansion. A music teacher taught them songs and dances of the pioneer period.

"In my class," says Strawbridge, "we made buffalo hides out of paper bags. We also constructed covered wagons and made a wagon train, including all the fine details of what pioneers carried on their trains.

"Then came a language arts element. Each kid had to write a short story or poem about the westward expansion. If it was a story, it had to include all the artistic elements of a story as well as the proper social studies elements. The

Idea Exchange

Gold Shoe Award

I'm an elementary physical education teacher with a problem: Children forget their gym shoes on gym days. So I created the gold shoe award. It's kind of like the Stanley Cup. Every two weeks, the class with perfect shoe attendance wins the gold shoe. Now, I don't have half the problems I had before. Some students even call classmates to remind them to bring their shoes.

To make the gold shoe, I painted an old gym shoe and nailed it to a piece of wood cut in the shape of a trophy.

James Myrick
Troy, Michigan

Educational Stickers

Many charities send me address labels, some with neat pictures. There's no way I can use them all. So I cut off the pictures, put them on paper from stickers I've already used, and use them on my students' papers. It takes a little time, but it saves on buying stickers—and it is recycling.

I explain to my second-grade students where the pictures come from, and we discuss other ways to recycle. I also discuss charities I contribute to. It makes an excellent science and social studies lesson.

Colleen Miner
Harlem, Montana

Future Careers

My students are just starting to realize that there's a world beyond their playground, so I try to connect their lives with the world of work on a daily basis. At dismissal, I write "Goodbye, future _____" on the chalkboard. I fill in the blank with a top-of-the-line profession that requires a college education, leadership skills and lots of training. I hope to encourage them to not settle for entry-level work and to move their imaginations off the typical dream of becoming a professional athlete.

Mary Beth Solano
Timnath, Colorado

Works4Me
nea's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea? You can pass along your tip to *NEA Today*'s 2.6 million readers in one of five ways:

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Drama teacher Christopher Wolfe (left), music teacher Leslie Thomas (middle), and third grade teacher Judie Strawbridge find that using the arts in class helps children learn their academic subjects.

same with poetry. It had to be artistically correct and historically correct—so the exercise was truly interdisciplinary."

In another project, music teacher Leslie Thomas taught students how orchestration enriches a musical piece, by starting with a melody and adding the orchestration. Then Strawbridge showed them how adverbs and adjectives play a similar role in written communication.

Strawbridge is convinced that the arts-infused approach helps her students learn better.

"It covers every learning style and modality," she says. "Some children are kinesthetic, and learn from movement. Some are more tactile, or verbal, or visual learners. No one was left behind by our method. Every child was touched."

"The teachers work as a team," says Amy Duma, director of professional development for the Kennedy Center.

"First, we help to acquaint them with a variety of artistic forms. Then, we provide them with specific information and challenge them to find ways to impart the information in an artistic, interdisciplinary manner."

Pullen Principal Jan Reed says the school's test scores have been rising since the program began two years ago, and last year, the eighth graders had the highest scores in their county.

"We aren't teaching to the test," she says. "We're teaching in a creative environment that the students love." ✔

—Matt Simon

For more: Visit www.nfie.org to read about grants currently available from The NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education. Visit http://kennedy-center.org/education/pdot for more on Changing Education Through the Arts.

[DILEMMA]

How do you respond when students tell you about family problems?

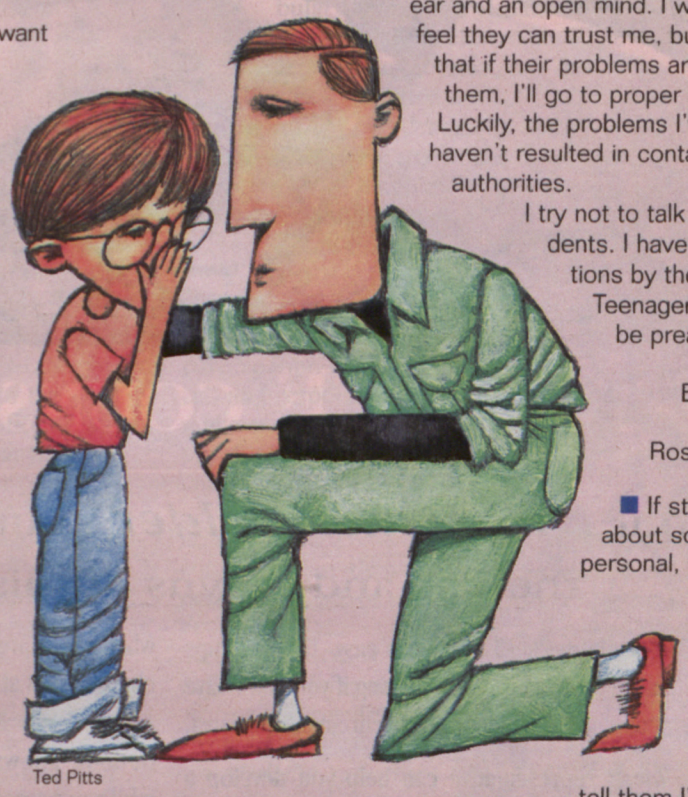
I find out what bothers them the most and give them coping tools. I try not to take sides. I help them realize the potential for personal growth that the situation presents. I role-play "I" messages with them and encourage them to talk with the other people involved. I teach them deep breathing techniques so they can calm themselves and encourage them to journal about their feelings. Most important, I listen. I can't solve their family problems.

Bonnie Hutchens
Ninth grade social studies teacher
Westminster, Colorado

■ Sometimes, all they want is a listening ear. Depending on the problem, I may alert the school nurse about potential dangers. She has good rapport with them and maintains communication with social services.

I can refer concerns to our Student Assistance Program for mental health, drug or alcohol concerns, or at-risk behaviors. I also can contact guidance counselors.

Darlene Forsythe
K-12 librarian
Galeton, Pennsylvania



Ted Pitts

■ Early in the year, I talk about "family talk" and "public talk" and how to tell the difference. We explore where it's "safe" to talk about private matters, and where to get help. When a student begins to tell about family problems, I suggest they talk to the guidance counselor or set a time when we can talk privately.

Harriet Hardy
Title I reading and math teacher
Gretna, Virginia

■ I'll never forget a boy who was having trouble getting work done. He said, "My daddy is in jail." I listened to his story about police coming to their home, and tried to assure him it would be worked out. I felt that having someone to share his worry gave the boy some peace of mind.

In junior high, I once found a note from a girl worried that a friend would commit suicide. We set up a conference with the friend, brought feelings out, and offered reassurances.

I never solved the problem for them, and I let them know that some things were out of their control. Bottom line—kids need to know there's someone who cares enough to listen.

Evelyn Tanner
Retired
Kaysville, Utah

■ The best way to respond is with an open ear and an open mind. I want students to feel they can trust me, but also to know that if their problems are harmful to them, I'll go to proper authorities. Luckily, the problems I've dealt with haven't resulted in contacting higher authorities.

I try not to talk down to students. I have them find solutions by themselves.

Teenagers don't want to be preached to.

Melissa Jordan
Eighth-ninth grade reading teacher
Roselle, New Jersey

■ If students talk about something deeply personal, I remind them that there's a valuable resource at school—the counselors. If they tell me of abuse, I tell them I'll share the information with a counselor. If you don't inform the student that you'll share the information, the student may feel betrayed—and you may be one of the few people that student trusted.

Pamela Galus
Tenth-twelfth grade science teacher
Omaha, Nebraska

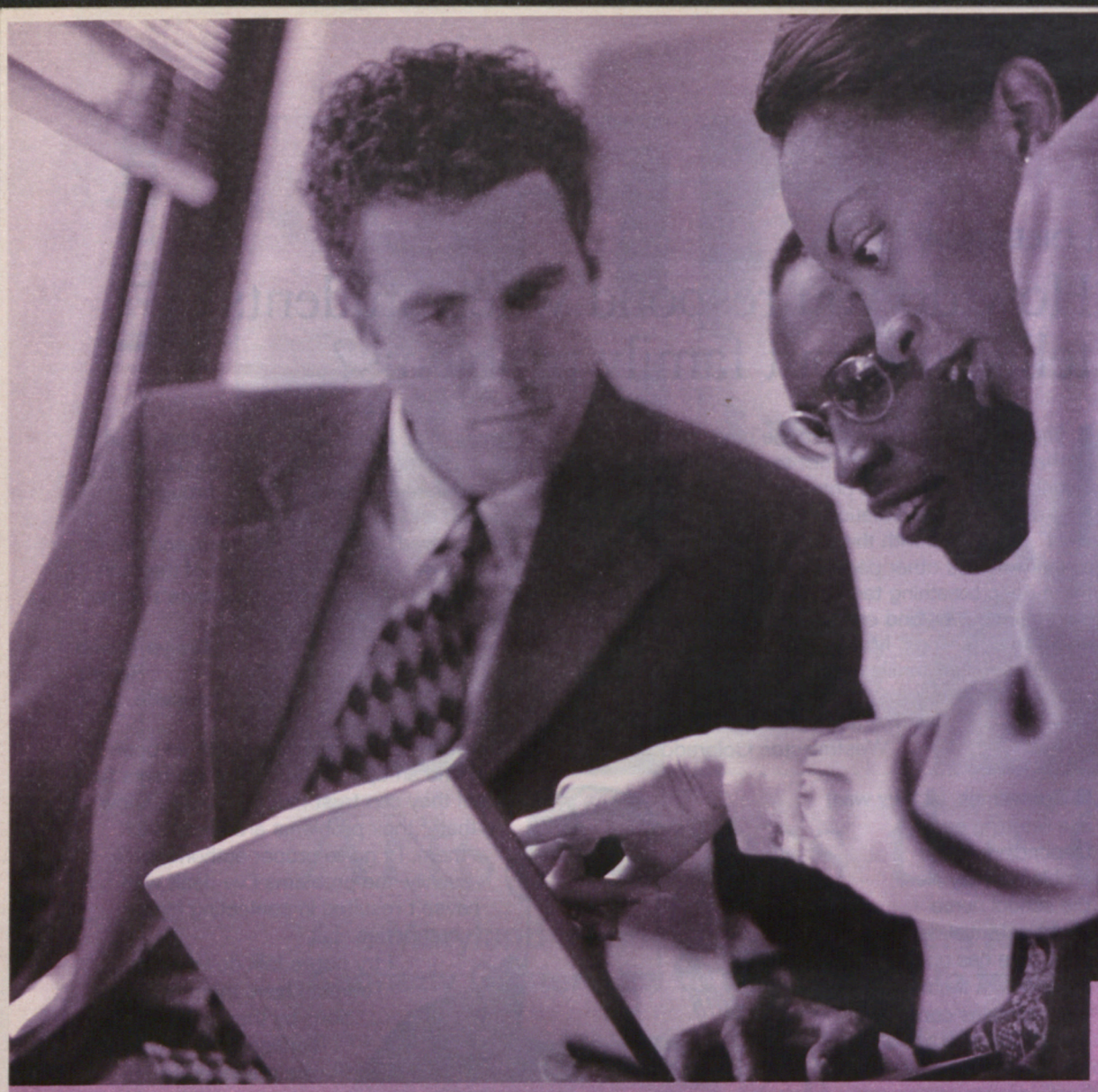
Got an Answer?

How do you cope with over protective parents?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Please include your name, city, state, and job title. Published respondents will receive an *NEA Today* mug!

"Real Teachers. . . wear googly-eyed jack-o-lantern pins out in public.**"**

—Karen Miller, elementary teacher, Garden Grove, California



STABILITY

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VBNT1001

Reaching Hispanic Readers

The Young Readers Summer Program shows young Hispanic students that reading skills are valuable in any language.

Rosa Briceño was too busy to go to the beach this past summer, but she did transport dozens of Hispanic kids there without a bus or van. Her vehicle? A book.

Briceño, family program coordinator with Arlington County Public Schools in Virginia, took part in the Young Readers Summer Program, a project of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) that encourages language-minority children to make reading a lifelong habit. The Arlington program—one of 20 sites nationally—was coordinated and run by the local LULAC Council, in partnership with the NEA and the Arlington Education Association.

"If we can help establish consistent reading practices at an early age," says Briceño, "students will have more of a chance of succeeding." This foundation is critical as Hispanic students get older and have to manage content-rich subjects, she says. "Without it, the achievement gap widens, and many will start dropping out."

That's why five staffers and two very active moms spent five weeks of their summer immersing 90 students from pre-K to fifth grade in the joys of reading. They read beach-themed books, made sand art, shared salt water taffy, even witnessed the shark feeding at the aquarium in Washington, D.C.

"When you build on involved reading experiences, it means something to the students," says reading ESL teacher Kathryn Scruggs, president of the Arlington Education Association. "And that's what makes for lasting achievement."

Sandy Schaeffer

Rosa Briceño works to make young Hispanic students strong readers. Without that foundation, "the achievement gap widens, and many will start dropping out," she notes.

All activities took place at Barrett Elementary School, whose regular population is 70 percent Hispanic or Latino. LULAC, with help from NEA, also started a monthly reading program at the school for parents and students this September.

"Research tells us that it doesn't matter what language you read in," says Briceño. " If you're able to master reading in your own language, it's very easy to transfer to another."

She suggests ways that educators can help build positive reading experiences for Hispanic students:

- Make sure school and classroom libraries are stocked with bilingual books.
- Encourage students to take bilingual books home so parents can read with them.
- Show that other languages have equal value by using and displaying vocabulary words and visuals throughout the classroom. That "background curriculum" is often neglected.
- Consider family library interactive storytimes that engage parents and students. Share books that are bilingual or in Spanish. Encourage participation through call-and-response and make-and-take activities. Finish with a book check out.

"Respect literacy no matter how it comes—in less-than-perfect English, or in Spanish," says Scruggs. "Literacy builds on talking and writing and reading in any language."

—Michelle Y. Green

For More: Visit www.lulac.org

Need more info? Look on the Web

Visit NEA's Read Across America Web site at www.nea.org/readacross for help in planning your NEA Read Across America activities. This year, nearly all the contents of the Resource Kit will be available on the Web—certificates, book lists, event ideas and more, and you'll love our new look!

www.nea.org/readacross/pledge.html

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HOW TO... INCREASE LITERACY THROUGH ART

Edward Gonzales is well known for fine art depicting Hispanic culture. Gonzales also produces a bilingual poster and calendar series that promotes literacy, learning, and cultural identity.

Why did you become an artist?

When I returned from Vietnam and got a degree in art, I decided my art was going to focus on the Chicano identity. One reason I felt compelled to do this was the lack of realistic images of Hispanics. As a child growing up in New Mexico, I wondered where the positive images of my culture were. I decided to use my art in a positive way to show how much our culture shaped New Mexico.

Why did you create the poster series on literacy and learning?

I wanted this series to send the message that Hispanic families want a good education for their children as much as anyone. Each of these paintings supports the theme that education is paramount in the Chicano family and culture. Everyone is appalled at the statistics that show Mexican-Americans doing poorly in school, but you never hear about the families who've sacrificed themselves to make sure their children have a sound education.

I wanted a visual means to say, even to children who have struggled in school, that education is important. That's a part of our heritage. It's also saying to the dominant Anglo culture and others that we have the same belief systems and expectations. We're not raising taggers and little gangsters. We're more alike than they realize.

Everyone wants a good education for their children. That's my social message.

How are educators using the series?

Educators from California to Delaware are using the series for the positive role models they show. Hispanic children and adults are depicted learning, teaching, and helping others. It helps Latino children see themselves, and it helps others understand our culture.

The fact that the posters are bilingual also sends a strong message. We are a nation of many cultures and languages, and young people need to grow up with the language of their culture. We should not fear other cultures, we should embrace them. That's why my art shows the beauty of my people.

For more: www.edwardgonzales.com

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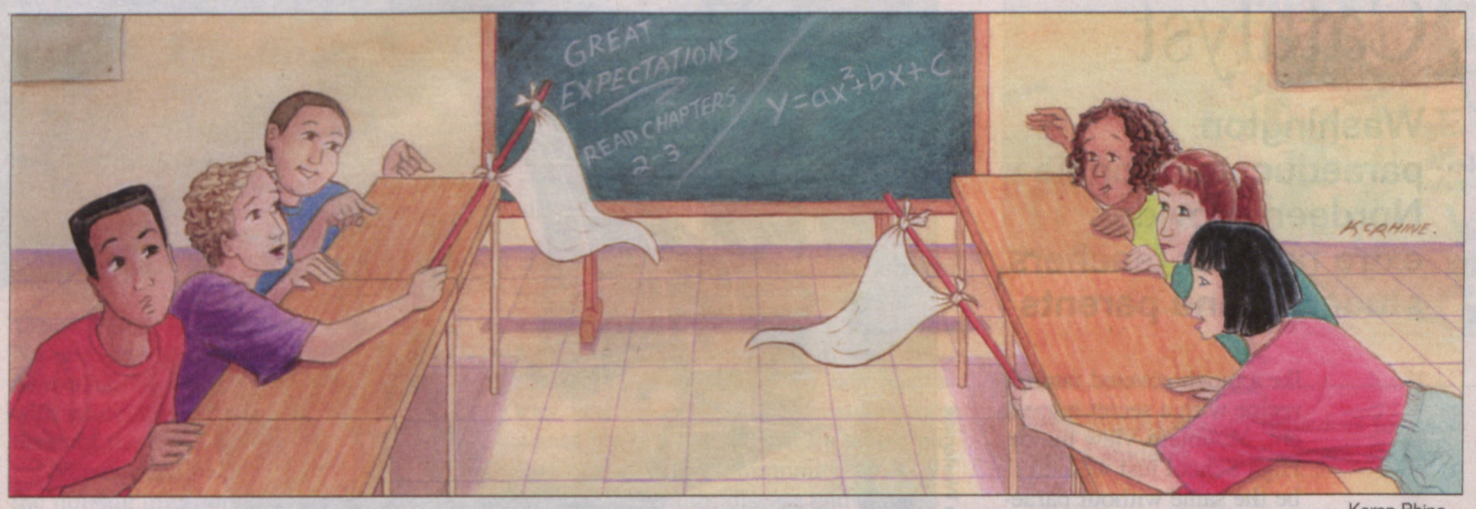
CDNT1001

Gender Wars

Is it time for a truce?



Karen Rhine

Do boys have an unfair advantage in school, or do girls? The confusing debate about gender and education has gone back and forth over the past decade.

But a new report by the American Association of University Women (AAUW)—Beyond the "Gender Wars"—*takes a different approach.*

Its conclusion: Both boys and girls are thriving in some areas of school life and struggling in others. And where they are struggling, the prejudices and expectations created by gender roles are holding them back.

What's the war about?

In 1992, AAUW released a study called *How Schools Shortchange Girls*. It found that women and girls were underrepresented in curriculum materials, that teaching behavior and tests tended to favor boys, and that girls trailed boys in mathematics and science. Such inequities, AAUW argued, severely limit opportunities for women and girls.

That was the first salvo. The other side has since fired back, most recently with *The War Against Boys: How Misguided Feminism is Harming Our Young Men* by Christina Hoff Sommers of Clark University. She charges that educators are trying to break the spirit of boys and make them more like girls.

AAUW's new report summarizes discussion at a symposium of researchers who study boys' and girls' experiences in school. It says educators should and could do better for both boys and girls.

"Issues of gender and gender equity are not either-or," says Barrie Thorne of the University of California, Berkeley, one of those who took part. "This is not a zero-sum game. There are multiple problems in the education of girls and boys that need to be addressed simultaneously."

Also, says the report, it is wrong to portray all boys as fitting one pattern, and all girls as fitting a different pattern. The characteristics of boys and girls overlap a great deal, and their problems in school are often shaped more by economics, race, or language than by gender.

"Race, class, and ethnicity should not be rendered invisible in some generic 'boy crisis,' 'girl crisis,'" says Michael Kimmel of the State University of New York, Stony Brook.

How do girls seem better off in school?

Girls are much less likely than boys to be diagnosed with attention disorder or be placed in special education programs. Girls also tend to outperform boys in reading and writing.

More women than men are pursuing college degrees. But, the report notes, that is mostly true in minority groups.

The numbers of white men and women in college are almost equal: 51 percent female and 49 percent male. Among African-American students, 63 percent are female and only 37 percent are male. Among Hispanic college students, 55 percent are female and 45 percent male.

How do boys seem better off?

Many more boys are in math-related fields such as computer science and engineering, which can lead to high-income careers.

Boys also often avoid some of the inner struggles that can lead to anorexia, depression and other disorders that peak in adolescence for girls. Girls' self-esteem and their interest in school work both tend to sink during the middle school years.

But this isn't true for all groups. Research indicates that African-American girls usually do not suffer a loss of self-esteem in early adolescence, and they are less likely than white girls to report a negative body image or worries about their weight.

Aren't differences among boys and girls in our genes?

"Anyone who would say that there's no such thing as nature would be silly, because boys and girls do have some differences," says William Pollack of Harvard University.

But he contends that social influences—from parents and other people—are 10 times more powerful than biology in determining how boys and girls experience school.

"When you talk to parents, they'll tell you, 'Oh it's really true. Girls really are more this way and boys are more that way,'" says Susan Bailey of the Wellesley Center for Research on Women.

Bailey doesn't want to deny these parents' feelings. She does want to acknowledge them and offer a reason why that might be the case—and also argue "that it doesn't necessarily have to be the case."

What can educators do?

Provide a school environment that goes "beyond access," says Pollack.

Yes, adults have dealt with legal issues such as prohibiting sexual discrimination in education. But schools need to aim for equal outcomes, not just equal opportunities.

The report urges building a culture that supports a wide range of choices for both boys and girls.

"Boys supposedly now have all kinds of opportunities to do things that they never did before," says Pollack. "But they won't do them. They won't take the chance because they're going to be made fun of, just as men can take paternity leave in three or four major corporations, but when you study new fathers, they never take it."

He adds that boys say "they'd like to have more of a range of how they can express themselves, that it shouldn't be uncool to be smart.

"They say, 'We want a school environment that can help support us so we don't get made fun of every time we try to be who we are.'"

—Dina S. Gómez

For More: Order the report ($9.95) from the American Association of University Women at www.aauw.org/2000/research.html.

TEAMWORK

A Positive Catalyst

Washington paraeducator Connie Nordeen provides extra help for teachers, students, and parents

Photos by Eddie Westerman

Connie Nordeen teams with teachers to make sure no student gets left behind.

Like a much-coveted family recipe with a secret ingredient, Mountain View Junior High School just wouldn't be the same without paraeducator Connie Nordeen, an 11-year veteran of Sumner, Washington schools.

Nordeen—recently honored as Washington Education Association's Support Person of the Year—runs two successful programs at Mountain View that define the phrase "partnership in education."

The school's in-school suspension program gives students the opportunity to have a "time out," she says. And Nordeen, who was hand-picked to run the program because of her "ability to work with kids," strives hard to make sure suspended students aren't just doing worksheets.

Paraeducator Connie Nordeen coordinates her school's in-school suspension program and a second program to help students stay on top of their homework.

"I get face-to-face with a student's teachers to get any and all assignments that may be missing," she says. "I want them to be productive while in my room."

She's not shy about tracking down teachers on their lunch periods, using the computer to research a student's grades so she knows his or her background, and even breaking into a class in progress to get what she needs.

"I try to keep the students who are with me focused on school so that they won't fall behind even more," she says. "I encourage them to set goals for themselves, then prod, push, and pull to get them to complete their assignments and pass their classes."

Colleague Carol Greer calls Nordeen a true treasure.

"I have seen firsthand the ways Connie can take students who are on the edge of failure and show them how to be successful," says Greer.

In fact, Nordeen's efforts are so successful that both teachers and parents of suspended students have consistently asked her for extra help. Even students themselves have asked for her time.

"I can oftentimes give them individual attention because there are so few students in my room," explains Nordeen, who has served as president of the Sumner Para-Educator Association since 1995.

Four years, ago, Nordeen started another program with colleague Carol Greer called the Homework Enhancement Program, an after-school curriculum that has helped thousands of students—and their parents.

"My own son struggled in school, so I make it my duty to call parents of students like him and say, 'I wanted to give you a heads-up that Johnny is missing these five assignments, but we have an after-school program where he can make them up,'" she says. "I then track down the student and say, 'Your mom wants you to stay after school.' Some of the kids get mad, but after they've made up their assignments, you can just see the relief on their faces."

The program, though voluntary, has "caught like wildfire," Nordeen says. "The teachers are encouraging students to attend, and even the students are encouraging each other.

"The staff has this 'we're in this together' attitude, and I think that's what makes the difference," she adds. "We're staying connected and focused on the kids." ✔

—Dina S. Gómez

Going the Extra Mile

Decking out a school bus with Christmas lights, owning a bakery, and supporting Goodwill and the heart and diabetes foundations don't show up in **Helen Cottongim's** school job description. But in addition to these activities and her duties as driver trainer in Boone County, Kentucky, Cottongim has driven food and supplies to flood victims, and been a stalwart of the local 4-H Club, helping children learn to ride and show horses. Cottongim was one of the first 40 driver trainers in the nation to achieve national certification back in 1992. She also helped found the first ESP local in Kentucky.

Shirl Anne Ingram, president of the Kyrene Classified Association in Tempe, Arizona, knows how to deliver an eloquent and persuasive speech on behalf of her 130 members.

As the only support professional on the district's 50-member Budget Advisory Committee, she had 15 minutes to make her point that ESP deserved a raise. She took the committee on a "virtual tour." Asking members to close their eyes, she verbally walked them through a school without support professionals.

"Imagine," Ingram said, "driving up to school and the yards are a mess. Inside, no secretaries answer phones or welcome you. Down the hall we hear water running in the girls restroom and there's water everywhere from a broken pipe, but nobody to fix it. A teacher at a computer can't sign on, but there's no technology staff to help. The school is quiet because there are no children. There are no bus drivers to bring them."

When Ingram told committee

TEAM PLAYER

Going Way Beyond Just Band-Aids

Name: **Debbie Greenawald, RN, MSN**

Job Title: Education Specialist, Certified School Nurse at Conrad Weiser High School in Robesonia, Pennsylvania

What I do: I'm here to promote health. No two days are alike, because I have to be available to treat staff and students with acute and chronic problems at all times of the day.

Nurses need to have a sixth sense. It's the nursing intuition to know that when a kid comes in with a headache, I can respond in a non-threatening way that doesn't embarrass the student but probes deeper to get to more complex issues, by interpreting non-verbal communication and by knowing the student.

It's a combination of knowledge and experience that makes me a better nurse today than when I started seven years ago. I am the only person in the building to speak from a unique nursing perspective that affects acres of education programs. Education is not "one size fits all;" not in health or in lesson plans.

Health and community: I'm advocating for education about coordinated school health programs. It's a team effort from the athletic department, teachers, food service, transportation, administrators, and the community—everyone who wants health and safety. It's a whole picture of family and community, physical and mental health, disease and fitness.

I have a vision of what a school could look like if everyone worked together to help kids be healthier and learn better. Currently, I am working to establish the Conrad Weiser Area School District School-Community Health Advisory Council to bring various resources in schools and the community to students, teachers, and parents. We're trying to teach lifelong healthy behaviors for success as students, as consumers, and as people.

John Urich

The rewards: As this year's Pennsylvania School Nurse of the Year, I am an advocate for kids with special needs. I can make a difference for them and that's what makes my job rewarding. I love this job. It makes me crazy lots of times, but it wouldn't make me crazy if I weren't passionate about it. ✔

RESOURCES

Health News To Use

If it's health information you're looking for, then a great place to start is the NEA Health Information Network Web site at www.neahin.org/.

You'll find topics such as school employee health, breast and cervical health, substance use, mental health and HIV/AIDS. Learn more about NEA's Cancer Survivors Network and Caucus and read or leave messages on the electronic bulletin board.

Privatizers Target Unions

Drive out unions, and drive down wages and benefits for employees. That seems to be the main goal of many of the privatization efforts taking place around the country. Politicians and privatizers alike trumpet the virtues of turning every service into some type of profit center.

If you're concerned about these types of developments, and what they might mean for your and your job, you can find out more by visiting the Web site of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

Go to www.afscme.org/private/.

Clean Air, Better Learning

Half of our nation's 115,000 schools have problems linked to indoor air quality, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. You'll find this out, and much more, if you take a look at the EPA's school Web site.

There's information on curricula to use, student performance, managing asthma, and trainings you can take advantage of. An IAQ Tools for Schools Kit covers virtually every aspect of indoor air quality. Checklists help you identify potential problems and what to do about them if you've already identified them. Learn how to overcome, as a school team, the financial, legal, managerial, and other issues that arise when striving for the best learning environment for children. Check out www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/.

Office Pros Pave the Way

The International Association of Administrative Professionals offers a Web site to keep office personnel up-to-date on the latest trends and news in the field.

Preview *OfficePro* magazine online and read about topics such as How to Deal with Supervisors Who Drive You Nuts on the Web at www.IAAP-hq.org. And don't forget: Administrative Professionals Week is April 21-27.

members to open their eyes, they'd heard the message. Support staff got the 5 percent across-the-board raise Ingram requested. "This truly is how important support staff are," she says. "We're behind the scenes keeping everything running." Support professionals had received only negligible raises since 1995.

A 15-year secretary, Ingram also serves as chair of the meet and confer negotiations group, which covers a broad range of issues from salaries to working conditions.

John Lynch, heating and air conditioning technician for Clark County (Nevada) schools, is part of a team of 49 HVACR specialists that is responsible for the climate control of 250 schools in the Las Vegas area.

"We're busy all the time with airflow problems, replacing units and working on temperature control problems. We also have a lot of windshield time, with some of our schools 95 miles apart," says Lynch.

He's also active in his 5,430-member ESP unit, the largest in NEA. And he's chief job steward, chairman of the bylaws committee, and involved in the election committee.

Outside school, Lynch has entertained kids as a Shriner clown for seven years. The Shriners perform at charitable events and bring joy to kids at burn centers. They also drive burn victims to a hospital in Los Angeles, about 325 miles away.

"You really bond with the families," says Lynch. "There's no greater pleasure than seeing a child who is happy."

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Learning Linked to Technology

When introducing poetry, I have my students browse Poetry.com and read as many different poems as possible. When they run into a poem that really strikes them emotionally, they copy it for the class. After they read and interpret their chosen poem, they play a piece of music that resembles the poem. It's interesting to see the creative choices they come up with.

Rosa Leporini
Eighth grade English teacher
West Paterson, New Jersey
Eponine111@aol.com

By making templates for use with primary age children, your job becomes a lot easier. You can make a template for letter-writing, hundreds charts, the five senses, or anything your class is studying. Or you can buy the templates books by Evan-Moore and scan them, copy to your computers, and have lessons ready to go for any subject area. If you then copy them onto all the computers in your lab, all students will be able to follow along as you teach a lesson using your templates.

Lynn Brengle
Second grade teacher
Manchester, Missouri
Tch4shoesldb@aol.com

My tip is to use PowerPoint or another software application to create students' electronic portfolios. Kids are so enamored with technology that they will be instantly focused and thrilled to create multimedia documents of projects or topics from your curriculum. Create task assessments and use a digital camera or scanner to visually digitize the works. Use text inserts to answer reflective questions and add those to the presentation. Create alternative assessment templates (rubrics, rating scales, and checklists) to be answered by the students. PowerPoint has added animation features.

Kids will be so self-directed when you turn them loose on an electronic portfolio project that you'll be amazed. This works with any grade level and any subject.

All you need is working knowledge of PowerPoint (or software package of your choice), the kind of portfolio you want to create, computers, scanners (or digital camera), and activities to be documented.

Show the kids how to construct a basic portfolio as you envision it. Give them time. Let them begin using the software, and before you know it ... presto!

Clyde Gaw
Art teacher
Indianapolis, Indiana

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they just keep moving forward on that futuristic climb
They won't stop for anybody and they're never going to wait,
these hands cannot be shaken with a bribe to change your fate.
Each minute-hour-day goes by and was it all a waste,
or did you take advantage of the hours that you faced?
What are your dreams, what are your thoughts, what visions do you see
go after them with all you've got, be all you want to be.
In all the things you do and say, be positive in every way.
Don't let the hands of time go by, they never turn around,
don't live on empty fantasies that never will be found.
The way you live your life and spend your time is up to you,
but make it count for something with the things you choose to do.
Be honest in your dealings, be proud of who you are.
treat others with respect, in life these things will take you far.
It's not too late, if in the past you've let time slip away,
as long as you're alive you can make changes now--today.
So time can be your enemy or time can be your friend.
Please make it count for something, before your time here ends.

Find all poetry all the time at poetry.com.

I created a classroom Web site a couple of years ago that included many links to educational sites. Recently, I have revamped the site to make it more useful for my students and their parents. I have included a variety of useful classroom information and links that allow parents to E-mail me or request a conference at their convenience. The more outlets we have to provide communication between home and school, the better the results for everyone involved.

Keri Kotchounian
Middle school special education teacher
Sunbury, Ohio
teachnlearn@yahoo.com

My students have constant access to wireless laptop computers in my science classroom. The computers are an invaluable resource on a daily basis. There are times when a student has a question and I might respond with "Why don't you search the Internet for the answer, and get back to us." The student heads to the back of the room and gets online to research.

The laptops are also utilized daily to produce lab reports, complete with graphs and data tables for a real professional appearance. For projects, the students are asked to complete numerous PowerPoint, Hyperstudio, and Microsoft Word projects. The students have ample access within the school day and can also check out the laptops (like a library book) for use at home. The wireless laptop computers have been an extremely useful resource in our classroom.

Amy Boros
7/8 grade science teacher
Technology resource specialist
Maumee, Ohio

My favorite Web site

My favorite Web site is one that provides easily dowloadable beginning readers for kids. For five dollars, you can download five books and five vocabulary sheets. Teachers can make unlimited copies for their classes. To see for yourself, go to www.early-foundations.com.

Julie Schmidt,
Kindergarten teacher,
Wausau, Wisconsin

Bytes for Beginners

I hear my students talking about listening to their favorite music using their computers and something called "streaming audio." What's this all about?

New technologies have made it possible to listen to your favorite music on the computer. These computer-based broadcasting innovations make it possible to convert analog data (traditional audio signals transmitted from vinyls or CDs or radio stations) into digital data, or bits; compress it—compression/decompression software, CODEC, removes sound data from the original sample for transmission over the Net and then adds some or all of it back when the tune makes it to your computer; and then resave it for broadcasting using one of a variety of industry formats such as MP3, RealNetworks, Windows Media Player, and QuickTime.

Special software such as Shoutcast or Icecast gives anyone—from traditional radio station DJs to high school students—the ability to broadcast music over the Internet. This makes the Net an ideal forum to tune in to and experience an eclectic mix of music.

Many college stations now keep in touch with their alumni via the Internet. For a list of radio stations or individuals who "stream audio," visit Shoutcast at yp.shoutcast.com/, or Radio Locator at www. radio-locator.com/.

TALK TO US

Have a nifty classroom tip or lesson plan that uses technology? E-mail a description (under 200 words, please!) to wiredclassroom@list.nea.org.

Is there a Web site, CD-ROM, or piece of software you can't live without? E-mail your favorites—and why you love them—to myfavoritetech@list.nea.org.

Or send your responses by regular mail to *NEA Today*, or by Fax to 202/822-7206, or through the Web at www.nea.org/cet.

Those published here will receive a sparkling *NEA Today* mug!

Active Kids, Healthy Minds

Young people are becoming increasingly inactive. They're staying indoors, staring at screens, and not exercising their bodies. And studies are showing that that affects how well they exercise their minds. Kandra Strauss of the NEA Health Information Network spoke to Judy Young, executive director of the National Association of Sports and Physical Education, about the critical issues of sedentary children and the benefits of physical activity.

How bad is the situation?

Children are leading more sedentary lives than ever before—almost half of all young people ages 12-21 are not vigorously active on a regular basis. A variety of factors have contributed to this overall reduced physical activity among children and youth today.

First, physical education classes have been reduced or eliminated for many students. According to the "Youth Risk Behavior Survey" by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, only 29 percent of high school students take physical education, compared with 42 percent in 1991, and only 20-25 percent participate in community or school sport programs.

Television, video games, and computers are very popular among kids of all ages.

Real and perceived dangers threatening children's safety when outdoors reduces free play opportunities.

Finally, many children do not feel competent and successful in their motor skills. The media have exposed kids to extraordinary performances in many sports, leaving some young people feeling incompetent and impatient in learning physical skills.

What are the risks associated with sedentary lifestyles in children?

There's substantial evidence of increased risk factors for cardiovascular disease such as obesity, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol levels. Reports show that 60 percent of overweight children ages five to ten years old already have at least one risk factor for heart disease. Obesity also increases the risk of Type II diabetes, which is associated with a variety of progressive physical problems. Many of these may not show up until later in life, but many of these symptoms are occurring at younger ages.

Physical inactivity contributes to almost 350,000 deaths per year, more than any other specific factor—except tobacco use. Inactive youngsters are more likely than physically active ones to be involved in other unhealthy practices such as smoking, poor nutritional habits, use of drugs and alcohol, and unprotected sexual activity. Inactive youth may also be more susceptible to depression, anxiety, and disruptive behavior in the classroom.

Is there a link between physical activity and student achievement?

Growing data support a connection between academic achievement and physical activity—whether through physical education classes or other outlets such as recess, clubs, classroom activities, and intramural and organized sports. Physical activity leads to good health and helps children concentrate and focus.

Physical activity reduces the risk of many physical problems, including some allergies, asthma, osteoporosis, certain cancers, cardiovascular disease, depression/anxiety, and obesity. And fewer sick days in and of itself boosts student learning.

Physical fitness provides the basis for participation in a wide range of activities and gives kids opportunities to learn about their own abilities, engage with their peers, and develop skills to be used regularly in adult life.

Engaging in physical activity and sports could greatly improve overall health and fitness, as well as self-esteem. Studies show links between increased physical activity and improved character development that could impact school performance and reduce absenteeism.

And the positive effects carry over into later life. Research has established that adults involved in physical activity programs miss less work, have fewer health insurance claims, express feeling better, and may be more productive.

Beyond P.E. class, how can school staff help students become more physically active?

Most definitely, there are a number of ways that teachers and education support staff can help:

- Ensure that students have opportunities to engage in physical activity throughout the school day.
- Don't restrict students from physical activity for disciplinary reasons. In fact, regular opportunities for short bouts of physical activity may ameliorate behavior problems and restlessness among students.
- Model physically active lifestyles. Encourage physical activity for staff before, during, or after school. Invite staff to participate in student physical activity opportunities.
- Solicit the help of physical educators on staff in providing alternative activities within confined spaces so that inclement weather or lack of a gym doesn't keep students from physical activities.
- Don't regularly preempt physical education periods for special school events, discipline, weather, or other reasons.
- Plan for school-wide observances of Heart Health Month, National Physical Fitness and Sport Month, and other related special events such as health fairs, family activity nights, parent participation in physical activities or "field day" events.
- Conduct a poster contest with a theme of healthy eating and physical activity. Display posters in the lunchroom.
- Establish a coordinated school health team to coordinate and plan for a healthy school.
- Limit use of food as rewards and the focus of holiday celebrations and consider special programs that involve physical activity instead. ✔

RESOURCES

- **Visit the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance Web site at www.aahperd.org for links to organizations working to enhance children's fitness.**
- **For seven helpful tips to motivate young people to exercise, visit www.nsc.org/pubs/fsh/archive/spr99/exer.htm.**
- **To view a copy of the Surgeon General's Report on Physical Activity and Health, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/sgr.htm.**
- **For the American Medical Association and American Academy of Pediatrics' Physical Fitness Guide for Kids and Teens, visit www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/health_safety/physical_fitness_guide_for_kids_.htm.**

Running by the Numbers

Connecticut elementary teacher Carol Goodrow knew very little about physical fitness and running until she joined a health club seven years ago. Now she's the leader of her school's running program and regularly competes in local distance running events.

When Carol Goodrow was named the 1994 Teacher of the Year in Tolland, Connecticut, she tucked her award money away to do something special for herself. That "something" was the start of what now has become one of her life's passions—running.

"I joined a health club, jumped on a treadmill, and that was it," says Goodrow, who teaches second grade special education at Parker Memorial School. "After about six months, I got up the nerve to enter my first running event and was just hooked after that."

"I sent an E-mail to the staff of Birch Grove Primary School elementary, where I taught at the time, saying that if anyone was interested in starting a running program, I'd be glad to help." The first response came from a colleague who wanted to keep weight down and reduce stress.

"We started running a mile, and then we gradually increased our mileage," says Goodrow. "Now, we do a four-mile, hilly loop a couple of times a week."

Krista, another first grade teacher, wanted to stay healthy and control her weight. So the two began a walk/run program together.

"We started running two minutes, then walking one minute," says Goodrow. "It seems so basic, but it's what we needed to do to work up to a mile."

She also heard from Mia, a paraprofessional who was a seasoned sprinter but didn't have much endurance. "Mia was wicked fast at the beginning, but couldn't finish," explains Goodrow. "She only knew to go as fast as she could."

Mia worked with Goodrow on changing her mindset to build endurance. Running together, the two set a comfortable goal of five miles. "Recently, we both entered a 5K run, and she really blew me away," says Goodrow.

She stresses how an educator's healthy lifestyle affects students.

"Heathful eating and exercising can help combat or prevent obesity, heart disease, many kinds of cancer, diabetes, and more," says Goodrow. "And we know that teachers are role models for kids. They see what we snack on in the classroom, and they become aware of the good habits and interests we have. My kids knew about my running and became runners themselves."

Goodrow, who's developing a "Run to Read and Write" program for students with special needs, found a simple way to reinforce those good messages to her students daily.

"At running events, you get these big running numbers," she explains. "I've collected almost a complete set from 1 to 100 to use in the classroom." Her donated numbers include one from astronaut Daniel Burbank and one from Olympian Rod DeHaven.

"Rod was the highest-finishing American in the Boston Marathon this year. He placed sixth and wore number 10. When I opened the envelope he sent me, I started to cry, because I knew this number 10 came from his Boston race, which had to be the race of his lifetime." ✔

—Michelle Y. Green

Kevin Goodrow

Carol Goodrow displays runner's numbers she's collected—like this one from Olympian Rod DeHaven, who finished sixth in this year's Boston Marathon.

For more: Contact Goodrow at goodrow@infi.net or visit www.kidsrunning.com.

Quick Tip

Sameta Rush

Ivars Mikelsons

Check out these tips to fall into a fitness regimen before the holidays:

- **Daylight Savings Time will be here soon. Plan to be outside two times a week before October 28!**
- **Set a goal to exercise twice a week, every week before the December holiday break. This requires one exercise session during the week and one on the weekend, or wherever you can fit it in.**
- **Sometimes it's hard just to *start*. Instead, focus on how you felt the last time you exercised—particularly how relaxed you felt afterward, not on the discouragement you feel at the onset. Whatever it takes, *start*.**
- **Keep a log of your goals and progress. Assess yourself weekly, and keep the big picture (one semester's work) in mind.**

If you're healthy, stress-free, and relaxed, you'll teach more efficiently.

Sameta Rush teaches physical education, video production, and writing at Steamboat Springs High School and Strawberry Park Elementary in Colorado, srush@sailors.steamboat.k12.co.us

NEA-HIN

From the **NEA Health Information Network**

■ HABLE CON SUS HIJOS SOBRE LAS DROGAS

The National Institute on Drug Abuse has published *Latina Juventud–Hable con Sus Hijos Sobre las Drogas y Sus Peligros* (Latino Youth–Speak to Your Children about Drugs and Their Dangers), a new brochure on drug abuse and addiction. Based on scientific research and feedback from Latino parents, young people, and community health professionals, the brochure includes the latest information on the health effects of inhalants, marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamines, and heroin, as well as information on prevention and treatment. To order a free copy, call the National Clearinghouse for Drug Information at 800/729-6686 and request publication number PHD854S.

■ ONLINE DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT PROGRAM

EGetgoing, an online treatment facility, has launched an Internet-based group treatment program that uses advanced audio- and video-conferencing technology to combat drug and alcohol abuse. Using traditional, proven treatment methods adapted for online use, this new format offers an affordable, convenient, and private way for people to combat their drug and alcohol abuse. For more information, go to www.eGetgoing.com or call 800/866-HELP-999.

■ ANTI-DRUG MEDIA KIT

The "Media Tool Kit for Anti-Drug Action" provides a wealth of information for getting involved in substance abuse prevention, including strategies for reaching out to parents and youth; how to promote and publicize drug-free activities; and ways to deliver the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign's messages to others to build healthy, drug-free schools and communities. The Media Tool Kit is available free online at www.mediacampaign.org.

Civil Rights Up Close

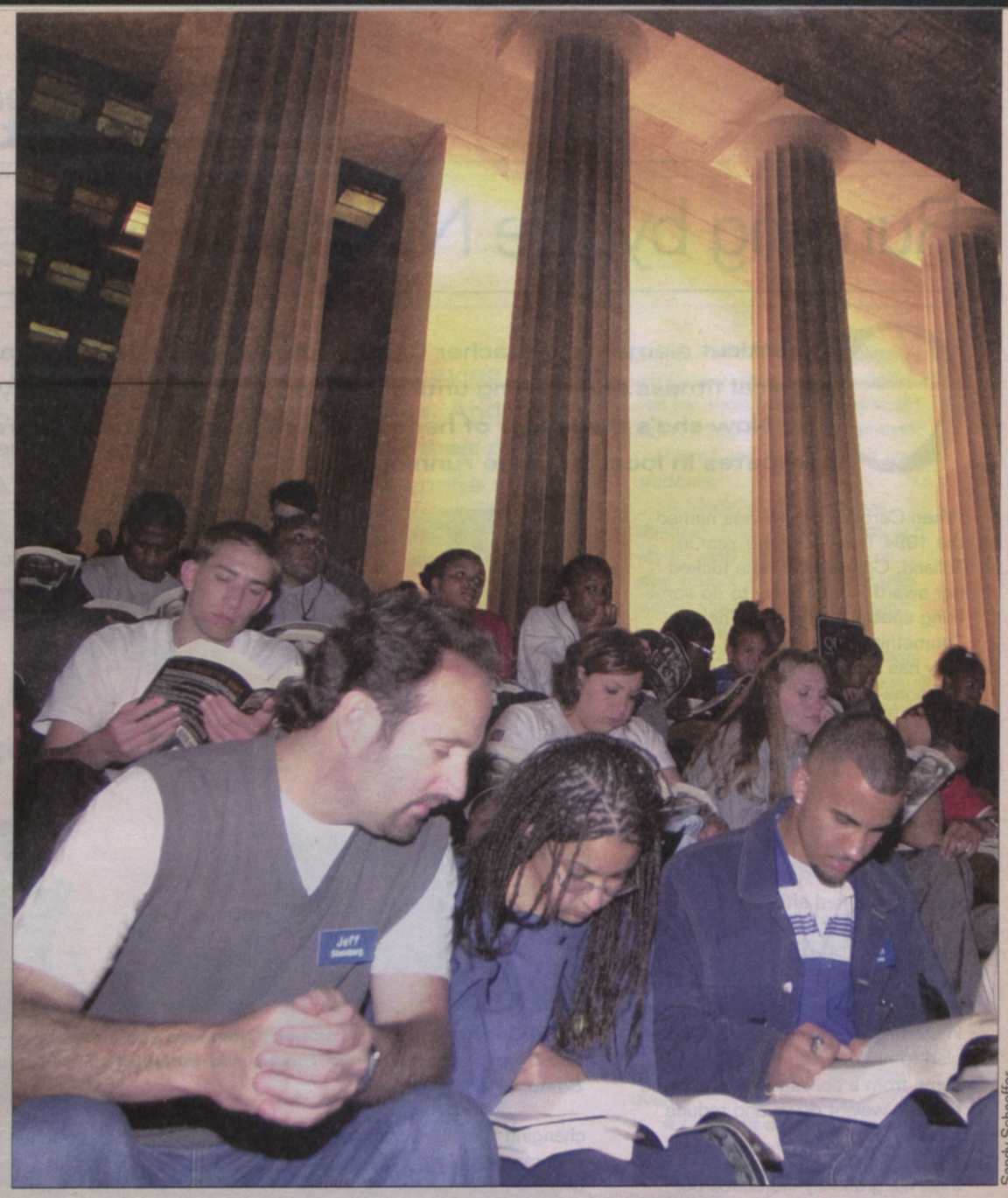
In 1998, after teaching social studies at California's Capuchino High School for 14 years, **Jeff Steinberg** spent his summer on a 4,000-mile trek through Washington, D.C. and the South to associate himself firsthand with what he'd been teaching about the civil rights movement all those years. After visits to the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, and other memorials, his life changed.

He drew up an itinerary for a student trip and started "Sojourn to the Past"— a program that, by the end of this year, will have exposed nearly 1,300 high school students from California and New York to a "living history" curriculum through on-site experiences and the reflections of civil rights leaders, as well as books, documentaries, and audio recordings.

During the trip, students meet movement veterans who impart lessons in tolerance, compassion, nonviolence, and more. "It's like a portable civil rights program that is having incredible long-term impact on the students involved," explains Steinberg.

Civil rights veterans John Lewis and Martin Luther King III sit on his board of directors and speak with the students.

Other speakers include Myrlie Evers Williams (Medgar Evers's widow), members of the Little Rock Nine, Robert Moses, the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth (a leader of the 1963 Birmingham movement), and Chris McNair, father of one of four little girls killed in the Birmingham church bombing. ✔



Sandy Schaeffer

Enhancing Learning on the Farm

Ron Corn

Lisa Whitfield may be an arts teacher in North Carolina, but her classroom is a far cry from a typical school. Whitfield is director of the Historic Johnson Farm in Henderson County, one of only three farms in the nation known to be owned by a school district.

Through the help of volunteers, Whitfield has managed to make the 131-year-old farm a place where children can visit to learn more about local history and participate in activities such as storytelling and candle-making.

Whitfield, who's been an NEA member for 30 years, spends half of her week at Hillandale Elementary School teaching arts and the other half at the farm managing bills, paperwork, advertising, and planning activities. The most important part of her job as director, she feels, is being able to coordinate field trips for children to the farm.

"The field trips give the children a chance to experience life on the farm through different activities. The favorite of most of the kids seems to be making homemade ice cream," Whitfield says.

Students can return each school term without having to repeat the activities they did the year before—first graders can make ice cream, while third graders make either soap or corn-husk dolls.

Whitefield believes that by giving students a little insight into the history of Henderson County, she provides a unique resource. Students are fascinated by tidbits of information they glean when visiting the farm. Whitfield adds that by teaching local history, students gain an appreciation for their community.

Vernon and Leander Johnson donated the Johnson Farm to the Henderson County School System 12 years ago. In 1990, through the help of volunteers like Whitfield, the property was converted into a place where students could visit for field trips. Whitfield encourages teachers to bring their students to the farm to have fun and learn.

"To be able to hear a student say they enjoyed their experience and learned something definitely makes my job worth it," she says. ✔

Who Wood Have Thoug

A Degree of Do-si-do and Promenade

Marcia Boone is a recent graduate. Her graduating class was made up of 17 people, and they accepted their diplomas to the strains of "Pomp and Circumstance." Their hats were made out of cardboard, and they even flipped their tassels at the end of the ceremony. Boone was not graduating from college or even from graduate school.

On a spring day in March, she received a degree in square dancing.

This was no easy task for the high school vocational specialist from Clayton County, Georgia. In August 2000, she started taking classes every Sunday. Boone eventually had to square dance blindfolded with balloons around her ankles—making sure they didn't pop, of course—for initiation into her local square dancing club.

For Boone, it was all worth it. She loves square dancing and makes her own dresses for square dancing events. Boone made a dress for a luau square dancing program in July and made one covered in shamrocks for a multicultural program at her high school in March.

"It's a great way for me to get out and meet people," says Boone. "It's also family-orientated, so parents can even bring their kids and have fun."

Although Boone has not started a square dancing club at her high school, she's participated in programs at the school where she shows off her square dancing skill—which got her students "whoopin' and hollerin'," says the light-footed teaching veteran.

As proud of her square dancing as she may be, Boone says her greatest satisfaction came when she was able to help a mentally disabled ninth grader make a square dancing skirt. The girl ended up winning fourth place in the state for her creation. Boone helped send her to the camp where she won the contest.

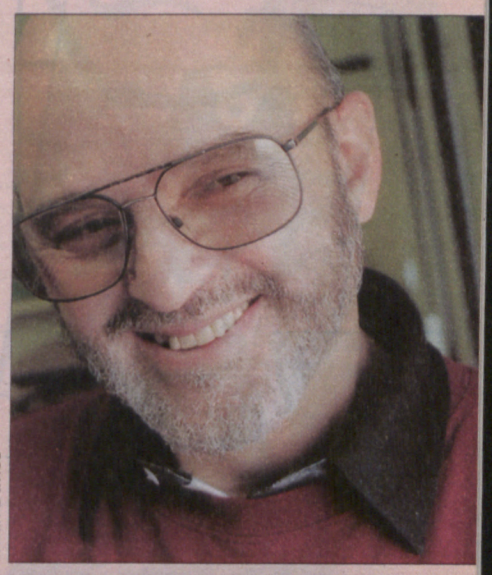
"Everyone was so amazed, because this girl is so shy and we were wondering how she would be able to talk to the judges," Boone recalls. "But she did it, and we are going to start making something else this school year."

Boone dances twice a week now through her club and other organizations in the Atlanta area, glad to have found a hobby that is fun and keeps her active. Now, with square dancing diploma in hand, Boone will continue do-si-doing.

"When I called my daughter and told her I had graduated, she told me she always knew I was square. I thought that was funny," Boone says with a chuckle. ✔

Matt Ferguson

Storytelling For a Grade



Brian Davies

Oregonian **Robert Rubinstein** loves to tell stories, but he loves teaching students the art of storytelling even more. Rubinstein, who retired last spring, spent his entire teaching career at Roosevelt Middle School in Eugene.

"I've taught all kinds of kids to tell stories," says Rubinstein.

Everybody can tell stories, notes Rubinstein, but his storytelling classes, each 12 weeks long, were geared to enhance students' self-esteem and academic achievement.

During the first six weeks, the class plays theater games to get even the shy ones interacting with classmates and building confidence. "All I want them to do is to participate," says Rubinstein.

The students then move on to telling stories. They tell them aloud, and Rubinstein grades them on projection, posture, variety of gestures, how well they know the story, and their progress and skill development.

Rubinstein founded and directed Roosevelt's nationally known Troupe of Tellers. During its 24 years, Roosevelt troupes have performed for more than 70,000 students. In 1993, these young tellers performed at the annual National Storytelling Conference.

Rubinstein also originated and still directs the annual Eugene Multi-Cultural Storytelling Festival, which he founded in 1990. The festival has brought well-known tellers from different ethnic backgrounds to 8,000 Eugene schoolkids —"a positive way to further cultural appreciation and understanding through story," says Rubinstein.

Rubinstein has authored several books. His first, *Who Wants To be A Hero*, was made into a movie that aired on Showtime. Rubinstein's most recent book has been internationally reviewed.

But that exposure hasn't changed Rubinstein's perspective on his work in Eugene. He plans "to stay active hosting the Multi-Cultural Storytelling Festival and writing books." ✔

George Trout, Jr. may be one of the few teachers around who can say: "At school, kids get mad when I don't come in at night. I get 45 or 50 kids for open labs right after school. They work until 5 or 6 p.m. and then come back from 7 to 11 p.m."

Every year, Trout finds with some of his high school industrial arts students just can't get enough sawdust. He holds additional evening classes—and attendance is so high he still has to limit participation.

After teaching 15 years, this man knows how to work with kids as well as with wood in Springfield, Pennsylvania, 10 miles south of Philadelphia.

Why do kids yearn to learn what he has to teach?

Trout (pictured at right) believes students crave this hands-on work because it's so rewarding. He says kids have computers in every aspect of their lives, and they grow to expect instant gratification. It's different and exciting to work on a huge six-month project and then look back on your work.

For the last six years Trout has had another project, restoring an 1883 Victorian house. "Everything's original. There's one coat of paint on the walls and no paint on the interior woodwork," he enthuses. Being a teacher with extremely eager charges, he's hired many of his students to help on the house. Currently pitching in are former students Jim Staeger and Matt Owens.

"I just love working with them," Trout says of the students who play front and center in his career and his hobby. "We've been working on the house for six years, and it's not nearly finished."

The kids learn everything from basic safety tips to how to make a ball and claw foot. "These kids have far surpassed what I've done in my life," Trout says. "They show me new ideas and sometimes I have to say, 'Well, I've never done that, but we'll try it. This is really all about problem solving and creative thinking. The tools are just a vehicle." ✔

MAKE BALLOT INITIATIVES WORK FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

STUDENTS, TEACHERS, FACULTY AND SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS FACE CHALLENGES EVERYDAY

No one knows better what works in our classrooms than education employees. We don't need more studies or blue-ribbon commissions to tell us what we already know. What we need are:

- Smaller class sizes
- Better salaries to attract and retain the best education employees
- Increased funding for professional development and growth
- Opportunities for children
- Modern school buildings

BALLOT MEASURES: THE NEW CHALLENGE

More and more, groups that know little about what goes on in our classrooms are using ballot measures to set classroom and teacher standards. They often promote an agenda that supports vouchers and tax benefits for private school tuition. Left unchallenged, they will continue to use the ballot initiative process to stall the progress we need in public schools.

WE'RE MEETING THAT CHALLENGE

At last year's NEA annual meeting, members decided to have a greater coordinated voice in ballot initiatives and legislation in states across the country. The results—

- We defeated voucher proposals in Michigan and California
- We passed a cost-of-living increase for education employees in Washington
- We passed a sales tax for education in Arizona
- We passed an education funding increase in Colorado
- We defeated private school tax credit legislation in Montana
- We defeated a proposed constitutional amendment that would have tied teacher and professor salaries solely to student achievement in Oregon
- We passed legislation that increases teacher salaries in North Dakota

MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD

The NEA Ballot Measure/Legislative Crisis Fund was created to give us a voice in what goes on in our schools and colleges. It's a way—either at the ballot box or in state legislatures—for teachers, faculty and support professionals to influence and support the things we care about.

We need your contribution to make our voice heard. By contributing, you can make certain that the state laws and policies affecting our schools and classrooms make sense.

Contribute today to the NEA Ballot Measure/Legislative Crisis Fund.
Contributions should be made payable to "National Education Association."

MAILING ADDRESS:
National Education Association
Department 286
Washington, DC 20055-0286

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM WITH YOUR CONTRIBUTION

The purpose of the crisis fund is to assist NEA state affiliates in campaigns to pass or defeat ballot measures or proposed legislation that relates to public education.

Name: _____ Social Security Number: _____

Address: _____
Street/P.O. Box City State Zip

Employer: _____ Occupation: _____

Local/State Associations: _____

NEA is seeking voluntary contributions only. Making a voluntary contribution to this crisis fund is not a condition of membership in NEA or its state and local affiliates. The size of a contribution, and whether or not you decide to contribute, will not affect your rights or benefits in NEA or its affiliates.

Please send contributions to National Education Association, Department 286, Washington, DC 20055-0286.

Contributions are not deductible as charitable donations for federal income tax purposes.

Should I Buy Now or Build On?

Q: Is it better to build on to a house or buy a new one?

A: I loved this question because I learned so much doing research for it. Of course, the answer depends a good deal on you. Yet there is a surprising amount of information available.

Remodeling magazine does an annual Cost vs. Value Index that provides the average cost for various remodeling jobs in different parts of the country. It also gives the average amount the renovation project will add to the resale value of your home and shows you what percentage of the cost you're likely to recover in a resale.

The magazine has a Web site at www.remodeling.hw.net. Go to the left navigation bar and click on "Cost vs. Value Report" and you'll get a list of projects such as attic bedroom, home office, bathroom remodeling, and kitchen renovation.

Because my husband and I have dreamed of adding a conservatory to our house, I clicked on "sunroom." I live in the East and learned that a sunroom might cost me $28,212 and that it might add $18,178 to the resale value of house, so I would recover just 64 percent of my cost. I also saw tips on how to get the most out of my renovation.

Equally interesting was what I found at www.realtor.com, where I went to look for the average prices of homes in different parts of the country. This site now has something much better than average prices. You can type in your address and zip code and ask for recent sales on your street or in your neighborhood. Or you could ask for the most recent price on a specific house. Here's a place where the Web has provided us with something really useful.

In the end, of course, you must decide what kind of tradeoffs you want to make. It's important to consider the value of your home as an investment. But to me, it's even more important to consider your home as your home. What will make you and your family happier and more comfortable? I think the family priorities should come first and the financial details second.

Q: What's the best mutual fund for a beginner?

A: I am asked this question more than any other. So you won't be surprised that I have a couple of things to say about it.

The first thing beginners must learn is that there is no one magic mutual fund. Investing is not like the search for the Holy Grail. There are lots of good mutual funds and lots of bad mutual funds. You should not be looking for the hottest performer over the past six months. You should be looking for a good fund that suits your needs.

Three things make a fund right for a beginner. First, it should have low expenses. If you are picking the fund yourself, you should expect to find one without a front-end load or commission and without a deferred sales charge. I like funds with annual expenses of less than 1 percent. And I try to avoid a 12 (b) 1 fee, which is a separate annual fee that is taken out of your investment every year.

Second, if you are buying just one fund, it should be well diversified. Beginners do well with balanced funds. A balanced fund invests in both the stock and bond markets; the bonds provide stability during stock market turmoil.

Third, you want a fund that you will stick with. This is critical. Countless investors pick a top-performing fund and then, when the market goes down, they get weak-kneed and bail out. That is a recipe for losing money. Study the fund before you buy it and make certain that you can take its ups and downs.

Q: I have $15,000 in credit card debt. I am getting married next spring, and I have promised to shut the door on the problems that got me into debt and start saving for our future. How should I get started?

A: Pay off your debt. Paying off debt yields a guaranteed return of whatever your interest rate is. So if you have credit card debt with an interest rate of 16 percent, paying it off earns you 16 percent. There is no place else where you can get a guaranteed return that high.

I know it's frustrating. When you decide to save, you want to save, to watch the money start building up in your bank account. But paying down the debt is the way to make the most of your money and to clear up your financial situation fastest. Talk to your partner about this before you get married. ✔

Mary Rowland is an author and contributor to several financial planning magazines. You can E-mail your personal finance question to her at MoneyQuestions@neamb.com.

Thrifty Educator

This month's money-saving tip comes from John McNamara, an instructor at Seminole Vocational Education Center in St. Petersburg, Florida.

I'm a vocational education teacher, so I'm often thinking of ways to use materials that other teachers and school employees may discard. One example are the old 286 DOS computers and monitors that have obviously outlived their usefulness in the regular classroom, but still have some life left in them for other purposes.

I use one of these old computers and a monitor to post announcements that my students can read as soon as they come into class. On another old retread machine, I enter weekly assignments and put them on the monitor nearby. These old computers also function well for student assignments that don't require large amounts of memory or processing speed, such as writing their own quizzes, letters, operator manuals, and such as we go through the year. These older computers, shed by others, have been useful and stable for several years now and they make my job easier. Plus, the students have a ready reference to keep up with the latest school announcements and assignments.

Got an idea?

If you have a suggestion for how your colleagues can save money at school, send it along to neatoday@nea.org.

NEA Member Benefits has over 1.9 million account relationships with NEA members and their families.

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

The NEA MemberCare, Critical Illness Program is the newest in an array of health and disability insurance programs designed to protect NEA members and their families from the financial devastation caused by unexpected serious illness.

Critical illnesses are more commonplace than you think. Based on national statistics:

- Every 2 minutes an NEA member will suffer some form of catastrophic illness.
- Each day 40 NEA members will suffer a heart attack.
- Each day 30 NEA members will be diagnosed with cancer.

The good news is that for those who suffer a critical illness before the age of 65, the likelihood of surviving is almost twice as great as dying.

That's why the NEA Critical Illness Plan is so important. It pays a one-time, lump-sum cash benefit upon confirmed diagnosis of a covered critical illness, or for death from any cause.

In addition, this plan is much more comprehensive than single illness (e.g., cancer) insurance, because it covers several catastrophic illnesses: heart attack, cancer, stroke, paralysis, multiple sclerosis, loss of sight or hearing, major organ transplant, renal failure, and member occupational-related HIV.

Members can choose a benefit level from $25,000 to $100,000, and a 5- or 15-year renewable plan or a plan extending to age 65. Individual or family coverage is available, with coverage for parents and parents-in-law planned for the near future.

For more information on the NEA MemberCare, Critical Illness Program, call the plan representatives at 800/884-2675, Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., CT.

Public Education's Remarkable History

Book chronicles 200 years of schooling in America.

EXCERPT

"One article of faith among the founding fathers was that a republic could survive only if its citizens were educated. School has continued to shape the core of our national identity. 'The free common school system,' Adlai Stevenson once said, is 'the most American thing about America.'"

SCHOOL: The Story of American Public Education
Edited by Sarah Mondale and Sarah B. Patton, Foreword by Meryl Streep
Beacon Press, $30. From ww.beacon.org.

On a typical school day this fall, almost a quarter of America's population will be inside a public school building. Even more will be working, in some way, to further education.

There is no doubt that public education is an enormous enterprise, one that is surrounded by a host of issues: how to educate children who don't speak English, how to fairly assess a child's academic potential, how to make education more equitable between the haves and have-nots, and how to find a balance between state and local control.

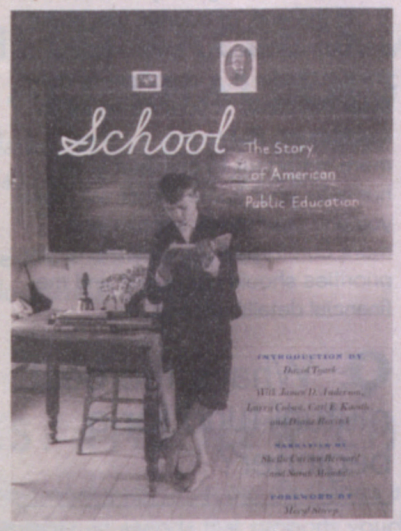
But according to *School: The Story of American Public Education*, the issues and questions educators and parents, politicians and voters grapple with today are not new. They have been around for 200 years, when free public schools were first introduced as a "radical, crazy-seeming" idea.

The book—which includes more than 125 black-and-white historic photographs, pictures, and line drawings that date back to colonial times—clearly presents America's struggle to educate all of its citizens over the last two centuries.

If you like an overview of history without a lot of detail, this book is for you. Designed as the companion piece to a four-part PBS documentary series that aired in early September, *School* is fast-moving, simplified, and vivid: the Cliff's Notes of America's public education history with a modern twist at the end.

The book is broken into four parts plus an introduction, each written by a different education historian.

Part one, by Carl Kaestle, looks at the "Common School" from 1770-1900. Formed in response to the Protestant concept that people needed to be able to read the Bible and interpret it for themselves, early schools were dealing with "multiculturism"—in a sense—even then. The bitter debate between Protestants and immigrant Catholics about the materials and methods presented in school led to the country's first Catholic schools in the



mid-1800s.

In part two, Diane Ravitch looks at the role of the public school in "Americanizing immigrants" from 1900-1950. With the passing of child labor laws to get children out of factories and into school, many more students started graduating from high school. This is also the time when college attendance began to soar.

In part three, James Anderson looks at the public school in 1950-1980, with the challenges of *Sputnik*, and an increasing focus on science education and creating equal opportunities for all students.

And in part four, Larry Cuban examines the public school from 1980 to 2000 with a brief overview of many of the challenges that have been mounting over the years: charter schools, vouchers, home-schooling, corporate interest, and the never-ending push for high academic standards.

Like a good television program, the book is colored with an abundance of quotes from education experts and historians, as well as interesting facts about American schools. What's missing? The serious debate about the very debatable issues in part four, as well as the voices of children, parents, and teachers.

But the pictures, combined with the simplified version of history, make the book an easy weekend read. It puts into perspective what we tend to take for granted today: how middle-class women were lured a century years ago to western frontier towns to become teachers; what it took to abolish school segregation across the country; and how Mexican-American students in Texas inspired the movement for bilingual education.

More than anything, *School* demonstrates that even with all of its blisters and boils, American public education has made remarkable progress over the years — especially given the demands that Americans have placed on their schools. It explores how Americans have sought to shape their society through public education.

While it lacks in-depth detail, *School* does not gloss over the array of practical problems schools face. What it does is suggest that we take a closer look at how well education has, and has not, adapted to the remarkable pluralism of the American population.

—Dina S. Gómez

BOOKS by NEA Members

Moonlight and Mill Whistles
By Terry Ward Tucker

The author is really South Carolina teacher Margaret Patterson writing under a pseudonym. Patterson, a teacher for more than 20 years, tells the story of a 13-year-old Tommy and his 17-year- old sister Jewel, both forced to work in a mill after their father dies early on and their mother is bedridden. Their lives change when a gypsy princess named Rona appears. A 52-page teacher's guide is available. $15 from Amazon.com.

Social Studies Internet Director
By Pam Vaughan

Travel around the globe with a click of the mouse. Explore the amazing world of social studies by completing map projects, viewing flags of all the countries, and going on virtual expeditions from your desktop. Member Pam Vaughan provides a helpful guide to social studies via the Internet. E-mail Vaughan at www.pamcob@ix.netcom.com to request your Internet directory.

Lessons from the Hawk
By Mark Kennedy

Teachers know that students learn in different ways. Kennedy explains how students' learning styles can be matched with the subject matter and how homework can be designed to build on students' talents. Kennedy believes schools serve students best when they allow—and encourage—individuality and diversity. $18.95. Order from Psychology Press/Holistic Education Press, Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733-0328, or call 800/639-4122, or go to www.great-ideas.org.

Character Kaleidoscope: Chinese Mythology
By Irene Dea Collier

Learning Chinese mythology has never been so easy and fun. Learn about mythology's themes, characters, and symbols. Question and answer section follows each chapter. An expert commentary section enhances the myths with opinions by noted scholars. This book by NEA member Irene Dea Collier has lively illustrations that will amaze and capture the imagination of your students. 128 pp. $20.95. Visit www.enslow.com to order, or write: Enslow Publishers, Inc. PO Box 398, 40 Industrial Road, Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922-0398.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Understanding Radiation

The National Safety Council's Environmental Health Center (EHC) offers a free kit for high school science teachers to help them educate students on a range of radiation issues, including types of radiation, potential health effects, nuclear waste repositories, and the roles of federal, state, and local agencies.

The kit contains two 10-minute videos on radiation and management, a 60-plus page book, a companion guide for teachers that contains classroom activities, and a color poster. To order, send an E-mail to radkit@nsc.org or write to the National Safety Council, Environmental Health Center, ATTN: Debbie Cohen, 1025 Connecticut Ave., NW, #1200, Washington, DC 20036; or call 202/293-0032. For more information, visit www.nsc.org/ehc/rad.htm.

Adventures on CD-ROM

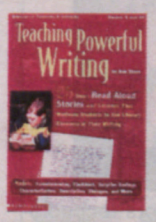
Dole Food Company's new CD-ROM for children aged five to 10 promotes family adventures and encourages eating five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables daily. It contains eight interactive modules with 42 fun fruit and vegetable characters, 10 imaginative new songs and numerous engaging activities that excite children about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables. State-of-the-art graphics and animation also integrate lessons in geography, math, science, and reading. Order by sending a check for $14.95 to Dole Food Company, Inc., 100 Hegenberger Rd., #100, Oakland, CA 94621. Visit the Dole Web site at www.dole5aday.com to find out about the 2002 Creative 5 A Day Teacher of the Year contest. Deadline is November 23, 2001.

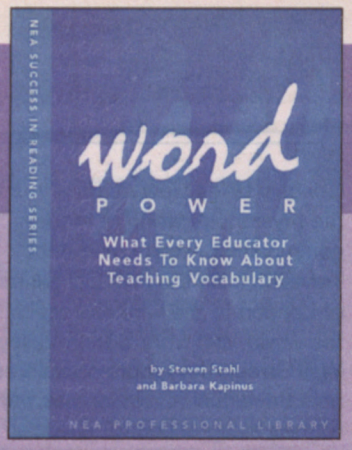
Inspiration for Teachers

Former national teacher of the year Sharon Draper's book, *Not Quite Burned Out but Crispy Around the Edges*, offers inspiration and advice to new and veteran teachers, based on Draper's experiences from a long teaching career. To order, call Heinemann Publishing at 603/431-7894 or go to www.heinemann.com.

Teaching Effective Writing

Reading stories written by others may be a great way to get your students to think about how they can better their own writing. In *Teaching Powerful Writing*, NEA member Bob Sizoo provides examples of good writing that demonstrate certain concepts like foreshadowing, dialogue, and description. Many of the authors in the book are teachers themselves, and Sizoo gives helpful tips on how to get your students to become more effective writers.

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A good vocabulary is one of the major building blocks for success in reading, and every content area has vocabulary to master. Whether you're teaching third grade math, fifth grade literature, or high school science, Word Power offers K-12 classroom teachers proven techniques for effective vocabulary instruction. You'll find out how to increase the vocabulary and content understanding of your students, involve your students more actively in word learning, and guide your students toward the deep understanding of words that comes from thoughtful learning rather than rote memorization. The authors of *Word Power*, Steven Stahl and Barbara Kapinus, give teachers the tools they need to turn their students into "wordophiles," by verifying what all readers know—there's always been a vital link between a love of words and a love of reading.

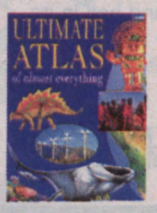
EXCERPT

In order for a student to own a word, the word and its meaning must be readily available for communicating. Far too many students and teachers believe that getting a word or definition correct on a quiz constitutes knowing a word. When a student can use a new word in conversation or writing, he or she truly knows or owns that word. Instruction that goes beyond assigning words and their definitions as preparation for a test carries the message that knowing a word means being able to use or think about it in a variety of ways.

$14.95. To order, call 800/724-4716.

The Ultimate Atlas

An Atlas and Encyclopedia all in one. Learn about people, history, cultures, animals, and places all in the *Ultimate Atlas of Almost Everything*. Explore how the earth was formed, get an exciting detailed look at the fabulous range of plants and animals, and view simple charts and colorful maps of all seven continents for $16.95. Visit www. sterlingpub.com or call 1/800-805-5489.



An Architectural Guidebook to Portland

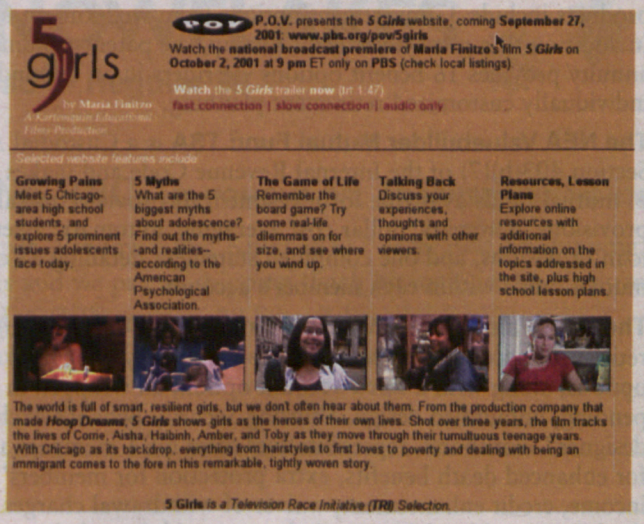
By Bart King

If you're thinking about a visit to Portland, Oregon, you may want to consult this book. King has written and photographed the eye-catching architectural highlights Portland has to offer. The guide not only has pictures of the monuments, but also the history and the significance of each major building, park, warehouse, and many more landmarks found in the five-mile downtown district. $15.36 from Amazon.com.

TVTIPS

P.O.V. — 5 Girls

PBS, October 2, 2001, 9 p.m. ET, check local listings. Web site (right) goes active September 27.


5 girls
by Maria Finitzo
P.O.V. presents the 5 Girls website, coming September 27, 2001: www.pbs.org/pov/5girls
Watch the national broadcast premiere of Maria Finitzo's film 5 Girls on October 2, 2001 at 9 pm ET only on PBS (check local listings)
Watch the 5 Girls trailer now (hr 1:47)
fast connection | slow connection | audio only
Selected website features include:
Growing Pains
Meet 5 Chicago-area high school students, and explore 5 prominent issues adolescents face today.
5 Myths
What are the 5 biggest myths about adolescence? Find out the myths--and realities--according to the American Psychological Association.
The Game of Life
Remember the board game? Try some real-life dilemmas on for size, and see where you wind up.
Talking Back
Discuss your experiences, thoughts and opinions with other viewers.
Resources, Lesson Plans
Explore online resources with additional information on the topics addressed in the site, plus high school lesson plans.
The world is full of smart, resilient girls, but we don't often hear about them. From the production company that made Hoop Dreams, 5 Girls shows girls as the heroes of their own lives. Shot over three years, the film tracks the lives of Corrie, Aisha, Haibinh, Amber, and Toby as they move through their tumultuous teenage years. With Chicago as its backdrop, everything from hairstyles to first loves to poverty and dealing with being an immigrant comes to the fore in this remarkable, tightly woven story.
5 Girls is a Television Race Initiative (TRI) Selection.

Following the everyday challenges of five real teenage girls growing up in diverse sections of Chicago over a three-year period, this film provides a glimpse into their struggles with poverty, sexual identity, race, parents' expectations, first loves, and overall challenges of growing up female in America. The program aims to break stereotypes that girls are unable to navigate through adolescence for themselves or that they don't desire relationships with their parents and other adults. ✔

TVTIPS

Insect Safari: Earth's Ecosystem

CNN, CNN Newsroom, October 1, 4:30 am, ET,

This CNN Newroom presentation teams up with the Smithsonian Institution to create a study of the interdependency of Earth's systems, as explained through insects. The program will cover topics such as plant life, entomology, and weather. Support materials at www.CNNfyi.com will include feature articles, an interactive quiz, video clips, photo gallery, and a link to the Smithsonian O. Orkin Insect Safari (http://insectsafari.com).

Egypt Beyond the Pyramids

The History Channel, October 1-4, 6:00 am, ET,

This two-part four-hour special explores Egyptian art, architecture, politics, culture, death, and immortality. Part One explores the restoration of several temples, examining the important role art and decoration played in their religious power and political prestige. In the second hour, the special turns to the mystery of Ramses the Great's missing children. Part Two looks at the everyday lives of Egyptian farmers, priests, and merchants in its first hour and examines the Egyptians' religious beliefs about heaven and hell in its second.

Electric Money

PBS, October 3, 9:00 p.m. ET,

In this two-hour special, Bob Cringely takes viewers on a tour of the mysterious world of money, commodities, wealth, and debt. Traveling from the financial centers of London to the wireless capital of the world, and from Silicon Valley to Wall Street, the program explores how the digital revolution has transformed every aspect of financial activity. The program explores how information technology has vastly expanded futures, options and stock trading, while offering insight into the invention of the credit card, beginning with the first step in the bills-to-bytes revolution.

The Ultimate Guide: Mastodon

The Discovery Channel, October 7, 9:00 p.m. ET,

This one-hour special follows the events behind the excavation of the near-complete skeleton of an 11,000-year-old mastodon. Scientists and volunteers, headed by Warren Allmon, director of the Paleontological Research Institute, pieced together more than 90 percent of the mastodon's skeleton. The program explores several controversial theories regarding the mastodon's North American extinction.

Incas: Past and Present

CNN, CNN Newsroom, October 8-11, 4:30 am, ET,

This CNN Newsroom presentation examines the life of a teen who is a descendent of the Incas and examines the ways the present-day generation preserves the values and the traditions of their ancestors. Support materials are available at www.CNNfyi.com.

The Ponder Heart

PBS, October 15, 9 p.m. ET.

Based on Eudora Welty's prize-winning novel, this Masterpiece Theater presentation tells the story of Uncle Daniel Ponder, heir to the largest family fortune in Clay County, Mississippi, who has a generous streak unchecked by common sense. Uncle Daniel's family tries to have him committed for his serial kindness and to saddle him down with a respectable bride, then Uncle Daniel winds up indicted for a mysterious murder. A companion Web site can be found at ncteamericancollection.org.

Weather Extreme

Discovery Channel, October 21, 8:00 p.m. ET,

Combining special-effects technologies, dramatic footage from actual storms, and insight from top meteorologists, storm chasers, and disaster planning officials, this two-hour special illustrates the power a Category 4 hurricane or a Force 5 tornado could unleash on a crowded metropolitan area, such as New York City or Dallas. The computer-generated imagery brings to life the natural process from which these catastrophes emerge. The program features interviews with a wide range of experts, from scientists and meteorologists to New York's and Dallas' disaster plan officials, to give viewers a full perspective of the consequences of these devastating meteorological events and to address preparedness plans in cities across the country.

FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Free Lesson Plans

Here is a way to consume time and also provide high-quality education for your students. Teachers nationwide strongly support the United States Mint's initiative to provide free lesson plans for Grades K-6. These free lesson plans feature lesson outlines, objectives, graphic handouts, interactive games, cooperative learning activities, and evaluation exercises. For more information or to order your free lesson plans contact Stephanie Dawson at 202/354-6717.

Experimental Science

If you have budding biologists in your science class, then *The Science of Life* is the perfect resource for you. This informative text introduces students to the scientific method and has 25 experi-

Two New NEA Valuebuilder Program Products
from Security Benefit

The new NEA Valuebuilder Program® products, developed in close collaboration with NEA Member Benefits, were created specifically for the retirement needs of NEA members. Both the 403(b) and the 403(b)(7) products include 37 investment options from well-known money managers. In addition to a great investment line-up, the patent-pending 403(b) variable annuity provides 16 benefit options via riders in an unbundled format for individually customized retirement planning.

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The NEA Valuebuilder Variable Annuity TSA is a 403(b) tax-sheltered retirement account that provides the same array of mutual fund investment options, along with a fixed-account option, all wrapped in a patent-pending, unbundled design. Utilizing Security Benefit's exclusive "annuity designer" workbook, representatives offer NEA members a variety of riders for enhanced death benefits, extra protection for members' retirement income, credit enhancement, waiver of withdrawal charges for specific disabilities and hardships, and alternate withdrawal charges.

Some variable annuities already include these features automatically, causing contract-holders to pay for options they might not need. The NEA Valuebuilder Variable Annuity TSA, by contrast, allows NEA members to pay for only the features they choose – no more, no less.

Both NEA Valuebuilder products offer the dual advantages of pre-tax contributions and tax-deferred accumulation. They are always fully vested, self-directed, flexible and portable from school district to school district so that educational professionals can take their accounts with them if they change job locations.

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ments so they can apply what they have learned. The book is meant for students ages nine and up and includes a glossary, bibliography and index that makes it a good resource for students, teachers, and librarians. The book, written by Frank Bottone, Jr. is available for $14.95 from Chicago Review Press. and is Call 800/888-4741 or go to www.ipgbook.com to order.

Student-Written Riddles

Riddle Math is classroom-tested and kid-friendly, in part because all of the math riddles were written by students. The book is recommended for students in grades two through five. The book provides guidelines for teachers on how to get students to write effective math riddles and provides lots of reproducible pages to use in your own classroom. Written by Carl M. Sherrill, the book is $21.95. To order *Riddle Math*, call 800/852-4890.

Exploring the 20th Century

Covering America's history starting with 1900 and going all the way to 1999 is no easy task to accomplish in one school year. Janet Kragen has made it easier, though, with her book *Decade Days*. Kragen gives ideas for teachers about possible activities for each decade. She includes projects, journal topics, and other activities for teachers who want to make learning history fun for their students. Recommended for grades seven through twelve, *Decade Days* focuses on history and social studies. $16.99. Call 800/421-5565.

Appreciating World Music

World Playground 2, a new CD released by Putumayo World Music, is a great way for you and your students to explore music around the world. On this CD, there is music from countries such as Jamaica, Trinidad, India and South Africa. The CD comes with a multicultural activity kit, which includes a passport so students can document which countries they learned about. The CD also has translations of all the songs included. *World Playground 2* can be incorporated into any curriculum starting with kindergarten and going up to the sixth grade. To order, call Putumayo World Music at 212/625-1400 or visit www.putumayo.com.

Far Out

The *Atlas of Space* is a pictorial reference that will teach you and your class how to find stars, name the moons, and learn about Hubble and his invention. You can order this 80-page resource for $12.95 from the Millbrook Press by logging on to www.millbrookpress.com.

Science on the Small Side

Popular Science offers four mini-guides to bugs, dinosaurs, space, and the earth. Learn how oil forms under the crust and how bugs communicate, by consulting these colorful and detailed guides. To order these $7.95 *Popular Science Mini Guides*, log onto www.sterlin pub.com or call Sterling at 800/367-9292

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fellowship for Teachers

The James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation is awarding fellowships to in-service secondary teachers of American history.

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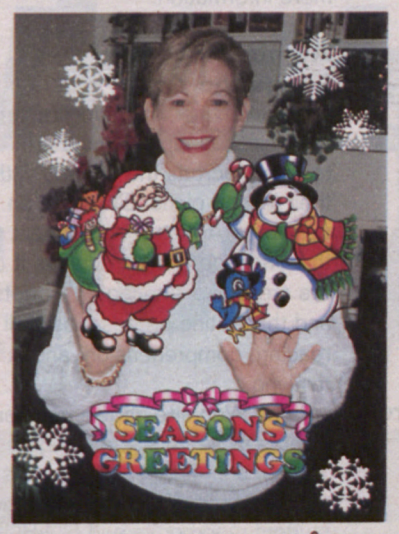

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American government, and social studies of grades 7-12. Also eligible are graduating and graduated collegians who wish to become secondary school teachers of the above subjects, concentrating on the Constitution. The award covers tuition, fees, books, room, and board, totaling $24,000. Application deadline is March 1, 2002. Write to James Madison Fellowship Program, PO Box 4030, Iowa City, IA 52243; call 800/525-6928. www.jamesmadison.com.

Online Weather Forecast

The Weather Channel now can be beneficial in the classroom.

Weather.com is the Web site that helps teachers and students prepare for their day. With daily weather forecasts, students can dress appropriately. This Web site also offers lesson plans on weather-related topics, a weather glossary, a storm encyclopedia, and other helpful information for you and your class. To receive a daily video forecast or view the weather maps, log onto www.weather.com.

75 Brainteasers

Chronicle Books presents an exciting, fun-filled package of puzzles. *The Mensa Puzzle Challenges* is a collection of 75 addictive games that may increase your brainpower and frustrate you at the same time. These 75 puzzles are challenging and are a great source of fun. These hard-to-put-down games include word analogies, anagrams, number problems, and secret codes. *The Mensa Puzzle Challenges* is $13.95 and can be ordered at www.CHRONBOOKS.com or by calling 415/537-4251.

Close the Book on Hate

Barnes & Noble and The Anti-Defamation League join forces for their 2nd annual "Close The Book On Hate" campaign. This kicks off at all Barnes & Noble locations October 15 and runs through November 15, 2001. The mission of this nationwide campaign is to educate adults on methods to reduce or prevent the development of prejudiced attitudes in children. These two organizations will host a series of free educational events for children, teens, educators, and community leaders. To obtain a full schedule of events, log onto www.barnesandnobleinc.com.

Grant for Teachers

Teachers are encouraged to apply for the 2001 Kids In Need Teacher Grants sponsored by the SHOPA Foundation for Educational Excellence. K-12 teachers of any subject from public, private, and parochial school systems are eligible. The individual grant amounts vary from $250 to $1000. Their purpose is to offer educators the opportunity to teach unique and innovative projects. Applications should be postmarked by September 28, 2001. Call 937/297-2250 or go to www.shopa.org for more information.

All about Language Arts

Futurekids, Inc. has launched a new Web site to help language arts teachers across the country with their lesson plans. *Switched on Language Arts* is a supplement to the language arts curriculum. It covers areas like language concepts and the writing process, as well as reading, comprehension, and critical thinking.

The Web site shows teachers what is included in the program. The supplement has a teacher's guide, a technology reference guide, student workbooks and CD-ROM. The product also comes with a guide of language arts requirements and goals within each state. Go to www.switchedonla.com for more information and to order *Switched on Language Arts*.

Online Journal: Teaching To Change L.A.

This online journal is by and about students in the Los Angeles community, aiming to make public the information and activities that further social justice. This is a Web site that focuses on the "Digital Divide," which is a term used to describe the gap between schools with computer access to computer technoloby and those without.

UCLA's Institute of Democracy, Education, and Access uses this Web site to post a variety of articles by experts, community organizers, and Los Angeles teachers. To view researched maps created by students that illustrate the critical relationship between income, college graduation rates, race, and home Internet access in Los Angeles, log onto www.Teachingto ChangeLA.org.

Welcome to the Computer Clubhouse

The Intel Computer Clubhouse is a series of 1,000-square-foot rooms equipped with 15-25 high-performance personal computers to help youth work with creative tools for graphics, images, animation, video,

and music production. More than 25 clubhouses are open throughout the United States to help prepare kids for the demands of college and the workplace. By enabling youth to develop technical fluency and be creators of technology, they will be able to get internships and jobs at nearby companies.For more details, go to www.intel.com/education/icc/index.htm.

Kids CARE Fund

The world's largest relief and humanitarian organization, CARE, has created a unique campaign to help teach children the importance of values and helping others. It receives donations from contributors in the name of their children or family members to help fund projects that support the long-term health, education, and stability of children in the developing world. In return, those families who contributed to CARE will receive mementos from that country, such as handmade dolls and key rings.

This year, Kids CARE will support the children and families of Ecuador. The donations will help to repair run-down schoolhouses. To make a contribution to the Kids CARE fund, mail your tax-deductible check to Sarita Gupta, CARE, 650 1st Ave. New York, NY 10016.

Children's Money Managing

Do children really know the value of a dollar? Using ideas that kids can easily grasp, several financial consulting firms have developed a three-week program that is very interactive in its approach to teaching children about budgeting and saving their money.

Kids are involved in the discussion throughout the presentations with the animated characters Lester Lynx and Budget Buck. Elementary students stay active during the 45-minute presentations. For more information about this child-based financial literacy program, write to 3510 Unocal Place, Suite 300 Santa Rosa, CA 95403 or visit www.linkcpa.com.

Children Do Best with Adequate Rest

Children need at least nine hours of sleep each night, and the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has launched a five-year educational campaign targeting teachers, parents, and pediatricians. To educate children about the need for adequate sleep and healthy sleep habits "The Sleep Well. Do Well. Star Sleeper Campaign" uses the Garfield cartoon character as its model, along with a 48-page book of games and puzzles. To get your series of fun, interactive, and easy-to-use sleep educational tools, visit http://starsleep.nhlbi.nih.gov.

Sight Night

This Halloween, don't just give out candy and treats, donate your old eyeglasses and sunglasses to Give the Gift of Sight. The organization collects, cleans, repairs, and hand-delivers used glasses to children and adults in developing countries. Volunteers, who will be a part of the Sight Night team on Halloween, will go door-to-door collecting those old eyeglasses that are gathering dust.

Last year alone, volunteers for Sight Night collected 86,000 pairs of glasses in one night. LensCrafters and Lions Club International initiated the program and Give the Gift of Sight volunteers have been providing eyeglasses to people in countries such as Tunisia, Morocco, Mexico, Bolivia, and the Philippines. The glasses can be prescription or non-prescription.

If volunteers for Sight Night don't come knocking on your door this Halloween, you can still drop off your used glasses at all Lens Crafters or Lions Club locations. Go to www.sightnight.org or call 877/605-4242 to find out how you can trick-or-treat for used eyeglasses on Halloween.

Get kids growing

There's free help available if you bring together a group of kids interested in gardening. The National Gardening Association, based in Burlington, Vermont, announces its 19th annual Youth Garden Grants Program. Groups of at least 15 children between the ages of 3 and 18 are eligible for the package of quality tools, seeds, plants, and garden

The deadline for completed applications is Nov. 1, 2001.

To apply, visit NGA's Web site at www.kidsgardening.com, or call 800/538-7476. The NGA also offers a newsletter, *Growing Ideas: A Journal of Garden-Based Learning*.

The Right Foot

Scholastic, the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books, now offers a magazine for new teachers. It's called *Instructor New Teacher* and is loaded with lots of creative ideas and insightful advice geared specifically for new teachers. It's a sister publication of *Instructor Magazine* and will have an initial circulation of about 200,000. Order by calling 800/SCHOLASTIC (Use prompt #2 and product code NTPH) or by logging onto Scholastic.com/Instructor.

Mighty Media

How much do the electronic media influence our children? It's a question that occupies us more and more, and if it's one that interests you, you should find out more about the National Institute on Media and the Family. This Minneapolis-based outfit, founded by David Walsh, Ph.D., serves as a resource for teachers, parents, community leaders and other caring adults. The Web site is at www.mediafamily.org and the toll-free phone number is 888/672-5437. Currently the site features KidScore, a rating system that evaluates video and computer games, movies and television from a family-friendly perspective.

Easy Learning

Learn a different language without learning grammar or vocabulary. Passport books introduces a cool way for kids to learn a new language and be cool at the same time. Kids can learn the French and Spanish they really want to speak, by learning phrases that will impress friends, family, and even teachers. 96 pp. $6.95 from Amazon.com

Keeping Track

Do you know the birth date of Ronald Reagan, or the day the slinky was introduced, well all these dates and more are in *The Teacher's Calendar*. For this school year, celebrate Hank Aaron's birthday, learn the date of the Million-Man March, and recognize Portugal's day of independence. This day-to-day directory is $17.95 from www.bn.com.

Managing the Culture

Cultural Resource Management is a free monthly publication of the U.S. Department of the Interior. One recent issue centered on Creative Teaching With Historic Places. By going to http://www.cr.nps.gov/crm/ you can offer feedback and view the list of past issues. You can also subscribe to the magazine by sending e-mail to crmmag@nps.gov.

Other recent articles in the magazine include Altogether Fit and Proper: Saving America's Battlefields; and Dam Good Archeology: The Bureau of Reclamation's Cultural Resources Program.

No Place for Hate

For high schoolers, Scholastic Inc. and the New Jersey State Commission on Holocaust Education brings you *Understanding Hate*, a compelling look at the roots of hate and its presence in today's society. From the past atrocities of the Holocaust to neo-Nazi propaganda on the Internet, this magazine speaks directly to students about hate, its consequences, and hope for solutions in the future. This curriculum-based magazine is a resource for teachers to facilitate meaningful classroom discussion on understanding where hate comes from and strategizing to stop hateful behavior in schools and our communities. Cost is $5. To order, call Scholastic Inc. at 800/SCHOLASTIC or order online at http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/magorders/index.asp.

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Caring about the Kids

As the United Nations prepares for its first-ever Special Session on Children, UNICEF is doing its part in helping world leaders realize the importance of issues facing kids today. They have started a campaign called Say Yes for Children in which people can go on to their Web site, www.unicefusa.org, and vote on issues that are important to children today. Topics include education, poverty, and HIV/AIDS. The campaign will take place through September 18. For more information, call 800/FOR-KIDS or go to www.unicefusa.org.

Explore Lifelong Learning

The Institute of Museum and Library Services has a primary focus on lifelong learning, partnership, and technology, and you are invited to explore continuing developments concerning these issues. As part of the 21st Century learning initiative, a conference will be hosted in Washington, D.C. from November 7-9 to examine experiments that will help create community partnerships for lifelong learning. Conference participants need to call the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Capitol Hill before October 9 at 800/233-1234 or 202/737-1234 and indicate that you are involved with the Learning Conference in order to get a special room rate.

A Kids' Geographic

National Geographic Magazine now has one other magazine sharing its famous yellow border. *National Geographic for Kids*, a classroom-based publication, has been launched and 50 classrooms across the country have already tested it.

Each 24-page issue will include a two-page, full color map relating to the cover story as well as an eight-page teacher's guide to each edition. The magazine will be published six times a year.

School memberships (minimum 200 students) cost $1 per student per year; classroom subscriptions (minimum 10 student subscriptions) are $3.95 per student per year. National Geographic has also sent out 1.25 million class sets to different schools across the country. If you would like to order a class set, call 800/368-2728 or go to www.nationalgeographic.com.

Space Day Adventures

Finally a fantastic way to promote science, math, and technology. Educators here are a chance for you to excite and inspire your students to participate in Space Day 2002. There are three online Design Challenges, "Inventors Wanted", "Mission Explore", and "Space Day Star", these projects include inventing a device that will make living and working on Mars easier.

All participants who submit solutions in by March 1, 2002 will receive a certificate of appreciation signed by Space Day Co-chair John Glenn. Registration began in September. For full details and information log onto www.spaceday.com or call 202/833-8121.

American Writers

Take a journey through history with C-SPAN's new yearlong series, American Writers. From September 10 through December 17 learn about the lives and works of selected American writers who have influenced the course of our nation's history. This historical program will broadcast live at historical sites associated with the writers' lives and works such as, Ernie Pyle, Ayn Rand, and James Baldwin. This educational program airs during school time, at 9:00am ET on Mondays for convenient classroom access. For further information log onto americanwriters.org.

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF
TOSHIBA NSTA EXPLORAVISION AWARDS

IMAGINE THE FUTURE

INVENT THE FUTURE

Here's a chance for your students to invent a technology of the future and compete for valuable prizes. If your students are in K-12, they're invited to ENTER the Toshiba/National Science Teachers Association ExploraVision Awards. NOW CELEBRATING ITS 10TH YEAR, the competition aims to encourage students to use their imaginations—along with the tools of science—TO CREATE A VISION of an innovative new technology.

Here's how the competition works: First, your students TEAM up with two or three other STUDENTS to select a current technology and explore its history. Then, the team researches and describes a new use for the technology, including what it could be like 20 years from now.

Their entry is due by February 4, 2002. In March, 24 regional teams will be chosen as semi-finalists. These teams will then create Web sites to showcase their ideas. Of the 24 teams, 8 finalist teams will be selected. Finalist team members, their parents and coaches will travel to Washington, DC in June for the EXPLORAVISION AWARDS Weekend where students of the four first-place teams will each receive U.S. EE SAVINGS BONDS WORTH $10,000* at maturity. The student members of the four second-place teams will each receive U.S. EE Savings Bonds worth $5,000* at maturity.

For MORE INFORMATION about the Toshiba/NSTA ExploraVision Awards, or to obtain an Entry Kit or a copy of the official rules, connect to www.toshiba.com/tai/exploravision; e-mail us at exploravision@nsta.org; call 1-800-EXPLOR9; or write us at Toshiba/NSTA ExploraVision Awards, 1840 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201.

Part of Toshiba's commitment to education and to fostering interest in science and technology, the Toshiba/NSTA ExploraVision Awards program is funded by Toshiba Corporation, the Toshiba America Group Companies and the Toshiba America Foundation, and is administered by the National Science Teachers Association. NO PURCHASE NECESSARY TO ENTER. Entrants must be a U.S. or Canadian citizen, or legal resident of the U.S., U.S. Territories, or Canada, 21 years of age or younger, and a full-time student in grades K-12, currently enrolled and attending an accredited public, private, parochial or home school. Void where prohibited. All entries must be received by 5pm, EST, Monday, February 4, 2002.*U.S. Savings Bonds issue price is half their face value. First-and second-place Canadian winners receive Canada Savings Bonds purchased for the equivalent issue price in Canadian dollars. Canada bonds vary based on current exchange rate (for $5,000 U.S. and $2,500 U.S.) at time of purchase.

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Antebellum Reform

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony are recognized as two of the most influential and prolific reformers of the 19th century. Now, you can track the first decade of their collaboration via Travels for Reform, an online collection of historical documents presented as live transcripts of the originals and graphic images. An introductory essay, selected biographical dictionary, and explanatory notes are also available on this easily-navigated and thorough site. To learn more about women's reform, antebellum politics, and the alliance of abolitionists and women's rights advocates, visit http://adh.sc.edu/sa/sa-table.html.

World Weather Education

Want to know if it's sunny in Rio de Janeiro? Raining in London? Or how about the five-day forecast for your hometown? Find the weather and climate of any place in the world with the meteorological Web site of the UK. This searchable page provides weather news and links to climatologists around the globe. Especially interesting is the education section, replete with weather data, historic events, a curriculum center, and resources. Be sure to check out the infrared globe disk, a continuously updated view from 36,000 kilometers above the earth. www.met-office.gov.uk.

Britannica Education

Britannica Education recently launched BritannicaSchool.com, an easy-to-use online resource aimed at helping students organize assignments and conduct research. BritannicaSchool provides colorful study guides on over 200 topics, along with activities, glossaries, and learning assistance. Templates and tutorials are also accessible to students, as are editor-selected links to age-appropriate and relevant Web sites. Currently focused on grade levels 9-12, BritannicaSchool will include kindergarten and elementary guides by 2001. For a free online tour and registration information, go to www.britannicaschool.com.

Practical Math

If you're looking for ways to relate math to real-world situations, this Web site can help! Math word problems are arranged by level, from grade five through twelve. Each section has a number of problems stated in sentences, encouraging students to relate mathematical concepts to external dilemmas. Hints are offered and answers are available at a click of the mouse button. It's great practice for kids and a handy resource for teachers. Visit www.stfx.ca/special/mathproblems/welcome.html.

Improving the Practice

Great Online Tools for Schools (GOT School, Inc.) announces a new site for educators to improve their practice, advance their careers, and share resources and ideas. The searchable database provides links to relevant articles and recent news, as well as a discussion forum, a section detailing professional standards, and certification information by state. Visit online at http://teachers.gotschool.com.

Girls' Math

"Boys are better at math" will be a less-heard phrase with the help of Color Math Pink's Website. Designed for elementary and middle school girls, it is designed to encourage and develop basic math skills. Visitors to this site will find homework tips, sample math problems, and helpful links, as well as workshops and other materials for parents and teachers. Visit this site at www.colormathpink.com.

Reading Rockets

There's a new Web site created specifically to help children learn how to read. ReadingRockets.org is the first part of a multimedia project funded by the Department of Education that includes a documentary narrated by actor Morgan Freeman, an educational television series, a bilingual print guide, and a series of teleconferences.

Launched by WETA, the public broadcasting station in the nation's capital, www.readingrockets.org features tips and forums for parents, teachers, tutors, and care givers, a database of the most beloved children's books, along with behind the scenes looks at how children's book authors work, video clips of reading teachers modeling best practices for teaching reading, interviews with reading experts, plus up-to-date articles on reading research and practice.

NEA is a partner in the project, along with more than a dozen other educational organizations.

DIVERSITY Calendar

October

Oct. 2-3 Sukkot
Sukkot (or Sukkoth) is the feast of Tabernacles, which begins at sunset on the 2nd through the 3rd. This Jewish celebration is a festival of thanksgiving, harvest, and the remembrance of the Jews who wandered in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt. Go to: www.jewfaq.org/holiday5.htm.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History Month
The month of October was selected to commemorate the anniversaries of the first two lesbian and gay marches on Washington in October 1979 and 1987. Among the special commemorations during October is National Coming Out Day on October 11, which marks the largest gathering to date of gays and lesbians supporting gay rights in Washington, DC in 1987. For resources and other information go to:www.glsen.org/templates/issues/?subject=2.

Polish American Heritage Month
To recognize the many contributions from the Polish, the month of October is designated by presidential proclamation as Polish American Heritage Month. Go to: www.polishamericancenter.com/ThingstoDo.htm.

November

Nov. 14 National Parental Involvement Day
The Thursday during American Education Week is set aside to recognize the important roles parents play in their children's education. NEA has a number of activities planned for the day and the week. Go to www.nea.org for details. For additional information, write to: Project Appleseed, Inc., 7209 Dorset at Midland Blvd., St. Louis MO 63130 or log onto www.familyweek.org.

Nov. 20 Anniversary of the Mexican Revolution
This is a national Mexican holiday to commemorate the start of the Mexican Revolution, which began on this day in 1910. Go to: www.inside-mexico.com/revolucion.htm.

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in the Light Lane

Mrs. Zippy's River

While working with my first grade reading group, we encountered the name "Nate," which the students were pronouncing "Nat." Usually, I remind them that the magic "e" makes the "a" sound like its name. Instead, I told them that it was a long "a" sound, at which they all said in unison, "N-a-a-a-a-a-a-t!"

Debbie Polin
Tustin, California

While teaching a geometry lesson to my second graders recently, I asked if anybody knew what symmetry was. Several of my students raised their hands and took guesses, but none was correct. Then one of my boys raised his hand and said, "Isn't that where people go to rest?"

Stacy Schmidt
Chandler, Arizona

In my music room, a fourth grade class was learning a singing game that involved choosing a papier-mache fruit or vegetable to put into a basket. Since some items, such as eggplants or turnips, were less familiar to some students, I had all of them, in turn, say the names of the fruits or vegetables they held.

One boy, looking a bit puzzled, held out his avocado. "I don't know the exact name," he announced, "but I know it's full of guacamole!"

Steve Riihikoski
Portland, Oregon

A few years ago I was working in Minnesota as a Title 1 reading teacher. I was discussing the use of reference books as an aid to locate special information.

My audience was a small but eager group of third grade students. I asked them, "In which book would you find information on the English Channel?" A smiling young boy was quick to respond, "The *T.V. Guide*!"

Linda Kelly
Vero Beach, Florida

I was testing a first grade boy with our school psychologist to determine eligibility for the resource specialist program.

One of the questions asked was if he knew how many seasons there were in a year. He proudly exclaimed, "Yes, there are two." When asked what they were, he stated without hesitation, "Hunting and fishing."

Cleve Herring
Monterey, California

"If I may, I'd like to put an optimistic spin on that report."

I was informing my first graders that next Friday would be picture make-up day. I explained that if they weren't here for pictures the first time, this was their chance for a make-up, and that they needed to bring their order form and money. One little girl approached me later, looking very upset and said, "Miss Hinsdale, on make-up day do we have to wear make-up? Because I don't have any!" I guess I didn't explain it as well as I thought!

Shelby Hinsdale
Yuba City, California

I taught a unit on expository writing to a group of middle schoolers recently. I had the students begin by selecting topics on which they were experts.

They were intrigued to learn that I was going to let them write essays about such topics as "Burping," "Annoying Your Little Sister" and "Shopping."

After several sessions, though, I noticed that one boy had not yet begun his essay. They were due the next day and I was concerned, so I knelt beside him and asked what the problem was.

He assured me he didn't need any help and that he was about to begin. I asked him what his topic was, and he answered, "Procrastination."

He certainly was an expert on the topic and produced a fine essay just in the nick of time!

Barbara Kutasz
Portland, Oregon

One morning, as I greeted my second graders, one of my students proudly presented me with her show and tell: an ultrasound picture of herself prior to birth. I commented to her, "Oh is this you in the womb?"

Another student, overhearing this and not to be outdone, put his hands on his hips and emphatically stated, "Well, so what, I have been in the womb (room) twice this morning already!"

Debra Scovill
Wellington, Utah

During a current events lesson on the new golden dollar coin honoring the Shoshoni Indian woman Sacagawea, our third grade class discussed the expedition of Lewis and Clark and how they went through a rigorous training program in 1803 near St. Louis on the banks of the Mississippi River. When it came time to summarize our discussion in our language arts journals, one student wrote, "Lewis and Clark camped on Mrs. Zippy's River." Oh! How we sometimes sound to our students!

Ruth S. Morris
El Paso, Texas

While watching over the first grade and kindergarten classes in the cafeteria, I told a young boy to stop being so boisterous. He responded, "I'm a boy, I'm not an oyster."

B.K. Parker
Boca Raton, Florida

Age of Innocence

After the first load dismissal bell rang, one of my innocent, bright second load first graders came over to my desk and asked me, "Mrs. Bergeron, what do you do after school?"

I looked him in the eye and tiredly responded, "Sweetie, when Mrs. Bergeron gets home, she fixes a cup of coffee. Do you know why she needs a cup of coffee?"

He shook his head 'no,' so I continued. "Because after school, I have to go home, change my clothes and start my 'second job.' You do know what my 'second job' is?"

I, of course, was referring to my "other" professional career of wife and mother of three girls.

He, however, with an affirmative nod of his head and the self-confident air of one who knows the answer, solemnly replied, "Jogging!"

Jennifer Bergeron
Houma, Louisiana

Several years ago, when children were much more innocent, a kindergarten student made this comment and it still makes me smile.

In art class, I was teaching the children how to draw portraits by having each child draw the face of a clown. I explained that we have to draw the real person's eyes first and then add the clown makeup.

One little boy raised his hand in shock and said, "Aren't clowns born that way?"

Linda Wanke
Weston, Florida

Got Laughs?

● Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane"
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www.womensorganizations.org

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The NEA Health Information Network supports the use of EPA's *Tools for Schools Action Kit* to prevent and manage indoor air quality problems. The kit includes guidance, a problem solving wheel, and video. Available for $25. To order please call 202/512-1800 (order #055-00000563-0)

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- $1 million worth of Common Carrier Travel Accident Insurance‡

And remember: you can always carry more than one MasterCard® credit card.

So don't delay. Call today to take advantage of all the savings and benefits of the NEA *Platinum Plus* Credit Card. Because at this rate, you'll want to consolidate your high-interest balances right away!

Call: **1-888-758-7946**, priority code B7IW.

nea Member Benefits
www.neamb.com

PLATINUM PLUS
the new standard

†Annual Percentage Rate (APR)	NEA *Platinum Plus* account: 13.99% for purchases; NEA School Days account: 16.99% for purchases.
Annual Fee	None.
Grace Period for Repayment of Balances for Purchases	At least 25 days from statement closing date.
Method of Computing the Balance for Purchases	Average daily balance (including new transactions).
Transaction Fee for Purchases	Transaction fee for the purchase of wire transfers, person-to-person money transfers, money orders, bets, lottery tickets, and casino gaming chips: 2% of each such purchase; $2 minimum, $30 maximum.
Transaction Fee for Cash Advances and Fees for Paying Late or Exceeding the Credit Limit	Transaction fee for Bank and ATM cash advances, credit card cash advance checks and balance transfers: 2% of each cash advance; $2 minimum, $30 maximum. Late Payment Fee: $25. Over-the-Credit-Limit Fee: $25.

†The current promotional APR offer for cash advance check and balance transfer transactions made with either account is 1.7% through your first six statement closing dates, commencing the month after your account is open. Thereafter, the APR that will be applied to all new and outstanding cash advance check and balance transfer transactions will be 13.99% for the NEA *Platinum Plus* account or 16.99% for the NEA School Days account. Cash advances and balance transfers may not be used to pay down or pay off any MBNA® account. **MBNA will allocate your payments to balances (including new transactions) with lower APRs before balances with higher APRs. Cash advances obtained through a Bank or ATM transaction are not eligible for the promotional 1.7% APR offer. The non-promotional APR for your account is not guaranteed and is subject to change.**

‡Certain restrictions apply to this benefit and others, as described in the benefits brochures which are sent soon after your account is opened. NEA School Days Card customer benefits differ from those available with the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, e.g., year-end summary of charges is available upon request; MasterPurchase Protection is not available and maximum Common Carrier Travel Accident Insurance coverage is up to $500,000; Credit lines run from $500 to $5,000, while *Platinum Plus* credit lines are from $5,500 to $100,000.

The NEA is not involved in the credit decision process; standard credit procedure is followed. All applications will be subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America.

Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program.

MBNA America Bank, N.A. is the exclusive issuer and administrator of the *Platinum Plus* credit card program.

The NEA Credit Card Program® has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew membership, that person and his/her family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates, fees and special promotions offered through the NEA Credit Card Program. If eligible, a replacement card will be offered. Any account opened in response to this offer will be governed by the laws of Delaware.

The information about the costs of the card described in this application was accurate as of 7/01. The information may have changed after that date. To find out what may have changed, please call (888) 758-7946. TTY users please call (800) 833-6262.

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